ROCHESTER, NY

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

May 2008

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State of the Arts
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A Community-Based Vision Plan for

Downtown Rochester

May 2008

New York

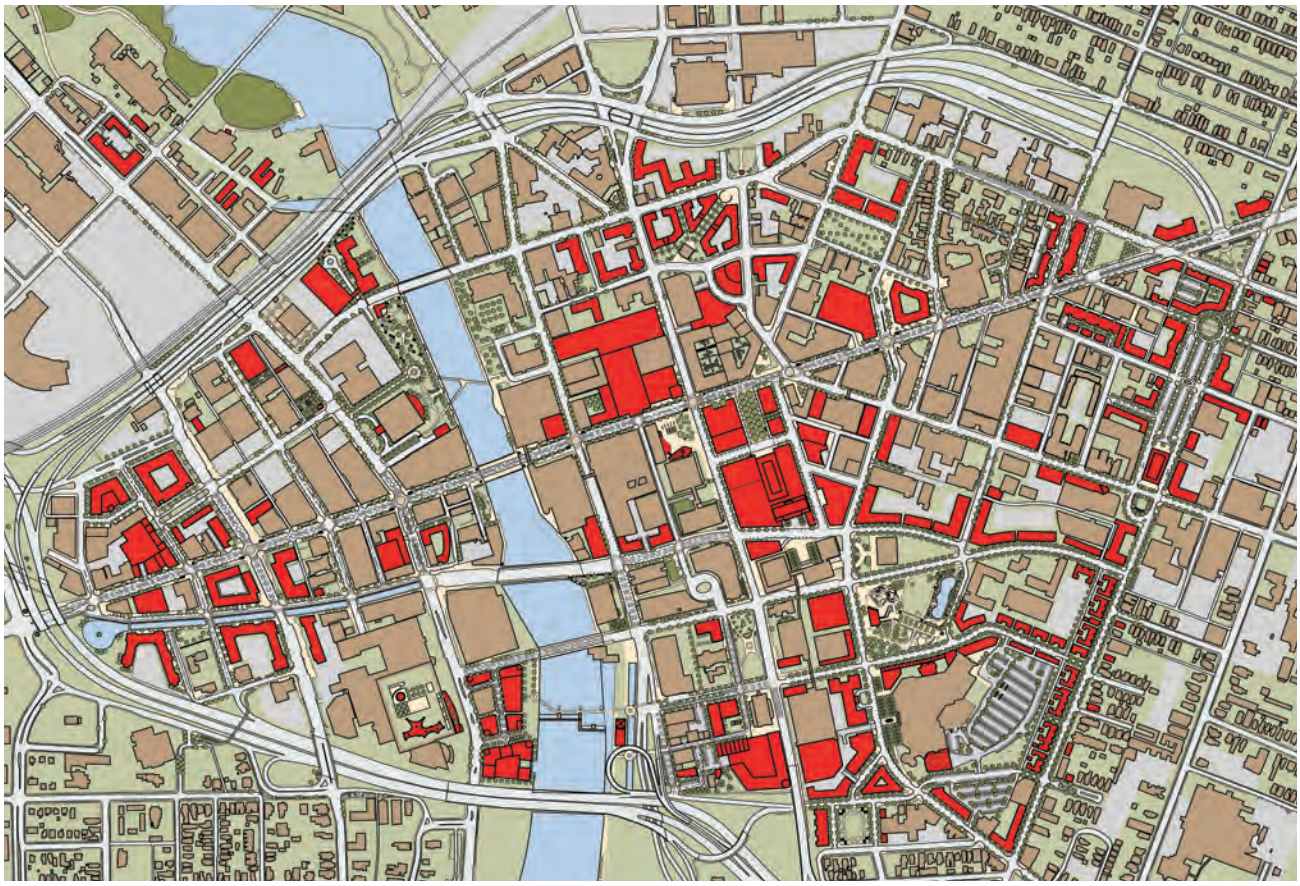

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....6

Executive Summary 10

Analysis/Current Conditions.....13

Summary of Guiding Principles 30

Charrette Focus Areas 49

Recommendations Summary.....120

Appendices.....133

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRCDC), formed in December 2003, is a regional, non-profit organization that advocates for community-driven planning and urban design. We believe that the promotion of quality design should be a defining factor in the current and future revitalization of Rochester's downtown. Building on the work in the Urban Land Institute study *Rochester New York, Strategies for Re-Creating the Urban Core* (June 2005), and on ideas from other sources such as the 2000 Rochester Downtown Design Charrette and the Center City Plan, formally adopted by City Council in 2004, the RRCDC coordinated and facilitated the 2007 Downtown Charrette held in January 2007. Partners in planning this event included the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), AIA Rochester Chapter, and representatives from the city and county.

One hundred and thirty local design professionals, informed by resource teams made up of community leaders and stakeholders, as well as area citizens, participated in the 2007 Downtown Charrette. This unprecedented volunteer-based three day planning and design session was organized around five distinct geographic focus areas in the downtown and yielded hundreds of ideas that have been carried forward and developed over the past year by five design teams. The recommendations, work and materials that have resulted are documented in this report along with accompanying drawings that are intended to serve as a basis for strategic planning, the creation of an official map, an amended Center City Plan, and the organization of a coordinated approach to development in the downtown.

Hard at work at the January 2007 Downtown Design Charrette.

CITIZEN-BASED PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

Inviting citizens and stakeholders into the planning process provides an opportunity to gather and consider ideas from a brainstorming and visioning process that engages the community. The citizen-based planning process is critical because it engenders broad ownership and investment by the community as well as the establishment of shared goals and support for initiatives that are being conceived and implemented.

The Downtown Design Charrette held at Midtown Plaza in January 2007.

Eight Guiding Principles were offered by citizens participating in the first downtown charrette, the 2000 Rochester Downtown Design Charrette. These principles have been valuable to community leaders, and served as a basis for the designs and strategies included in the Center City Master Plan, the official plan for the downtown adopted by City Council in 2004. The Guiding Principles include the following:

- Pedestrian Friendly Downtown;
- Connectivity;
- Greener Downtown;
- Beautiful Gateways;
- Elimination of the Inner Loop;
- Making the River a Central Feature;
- Encouraging Housing Development;
- Creation of Downtown Design Standards.

The rationale for a second downtown charrette was to build on the foundation of what was accomplished in 2000 and to carry what was established at that time to a greater level of detail and comprehensiveness. The momentum created by an increasing number of current and proposed projects for the downtown since the 2000 Charrette has highlighted the need for a coherent and well orchestrated approach for Center City as interest in the area and development increases. Treatment of the urban fabric, opportunity for economic growth and ensuring the sustainability of the downtown as a livable area will require a coordinated, well thought out approach. This will involve the formation of partnerships of key stakeholders from the private, public and institutional sectors who will champion and help implement projects and policies; identification of targeted improvements; high quality public and private sector development; and the support and input of the region's citizens.

Rochester's Center City Master Plan developed in 2003.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE DOWNTOWN

Several key concepts emerged from the work of the 2007 Downtown Charrette participants, resulting in the following recommendations for revitalization efforts going forward:

- Actively engage citizens, developers, investors and other stakeholders and the public sector in a process to build support and promote civic pride;
- Provide incentives and standards for high quality development that serve a wide spectrum of people and uses;
- Build strong partnerships and follow a coordinated approach to development;
- Make downtown housing available to a diverse population including middle class workers;
- Increase the ease of getting around, providing safe, accessible means to mobility as an alternative to the automobile;
- View downtown as a destination as opposed to a place to get through quickly, changing our fundamental approach to street design, traffic management and circulation to create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

The traditional role of our downtown has changed; it is no longer the commercial center of our region. Existing conditions in Center City have been shaped by factors resulting from a dramatic shift in population and movement of business, commerce and services to the suburbs and surrounding region. Today downtown Rochester is at a critical juncture, experiencing a resurgence of investment and growth after decades of decline. We have an opportunity to re-establish the downtown as a viable center. Current demographic trends and interest in an urban lifestyle have placed a demand on available property for housing for "GenXers," "Empty Nesters" and others who desire to live in and take advantage of the amenities offered in our downtown: distinctive districts and neighborhoods, the Genesee River, unique architecture, and cultural and historic attractions.

Rochester's Main Street—a corridor still lined with historic building stock—offers intriguing redevelopment possibilities.

It is likely that downtown Rochester will become more economically competitive as we move into an era of expensive oil and energy with the need to conserve. Taking advantage of these conditions will require both cooperation and partnerships between the public and private sectors and necessitate a renewed focus on the condition of the infrastructure and public realm. Consistent with these trends, there will be new opportunities to grow the tax base, given planned and current key redevelopment projects that will significantly enhance and reinvigorate downtown.

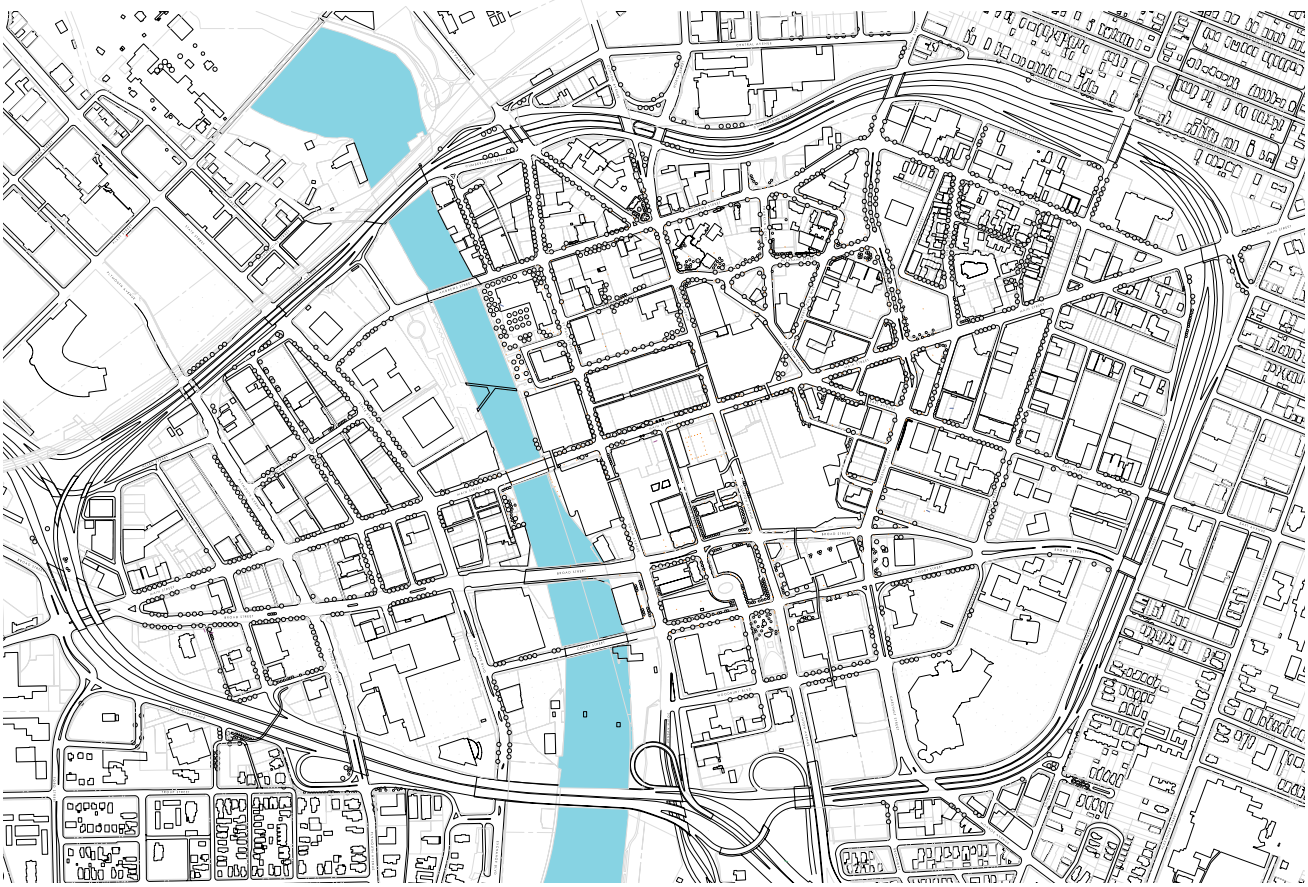
As private investors fuel development, government, along with professional and advisory planning organizations, will need to serve as a guiding force for planned targeted improvements and thoughtful policies that foster a predictable climate for development. To that end, these organizations can play a key role in spurring economic vitality, taking advantage of downtown as a destination by encouraging beneficial partnerships and cooperation. ▲

Analysis/Current Conditions

The maps and photographs in this section illustrate existing conditions in the downtown's built environment, related to its positive assets along with opportunities and challenges that must be dealt with as part of a coordinated development plan to revitalize Center City.

The **Existing Conditions Map** (Figure 1 below) shows the streets, sidewalks, buildings, parking lots, trees, bridges, and other elements of the built environment in its current (2007) form. This map was created from the city's latest GIS information in combination with Pictometry images and field observations. It is the base map for all of the design and vision plans presented in this report.

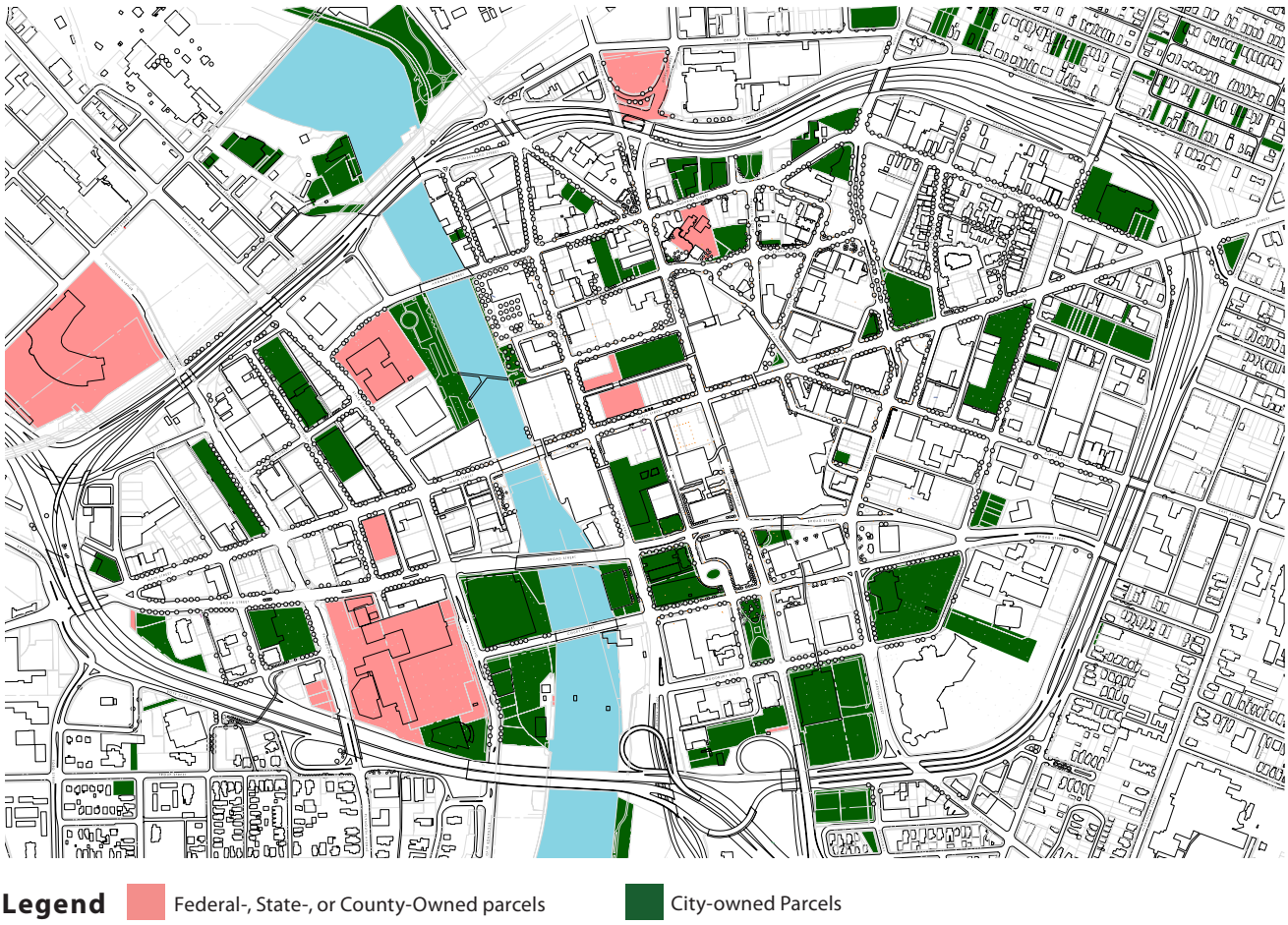
Intersection of Main Street and East Avenue, Rochester, NY.



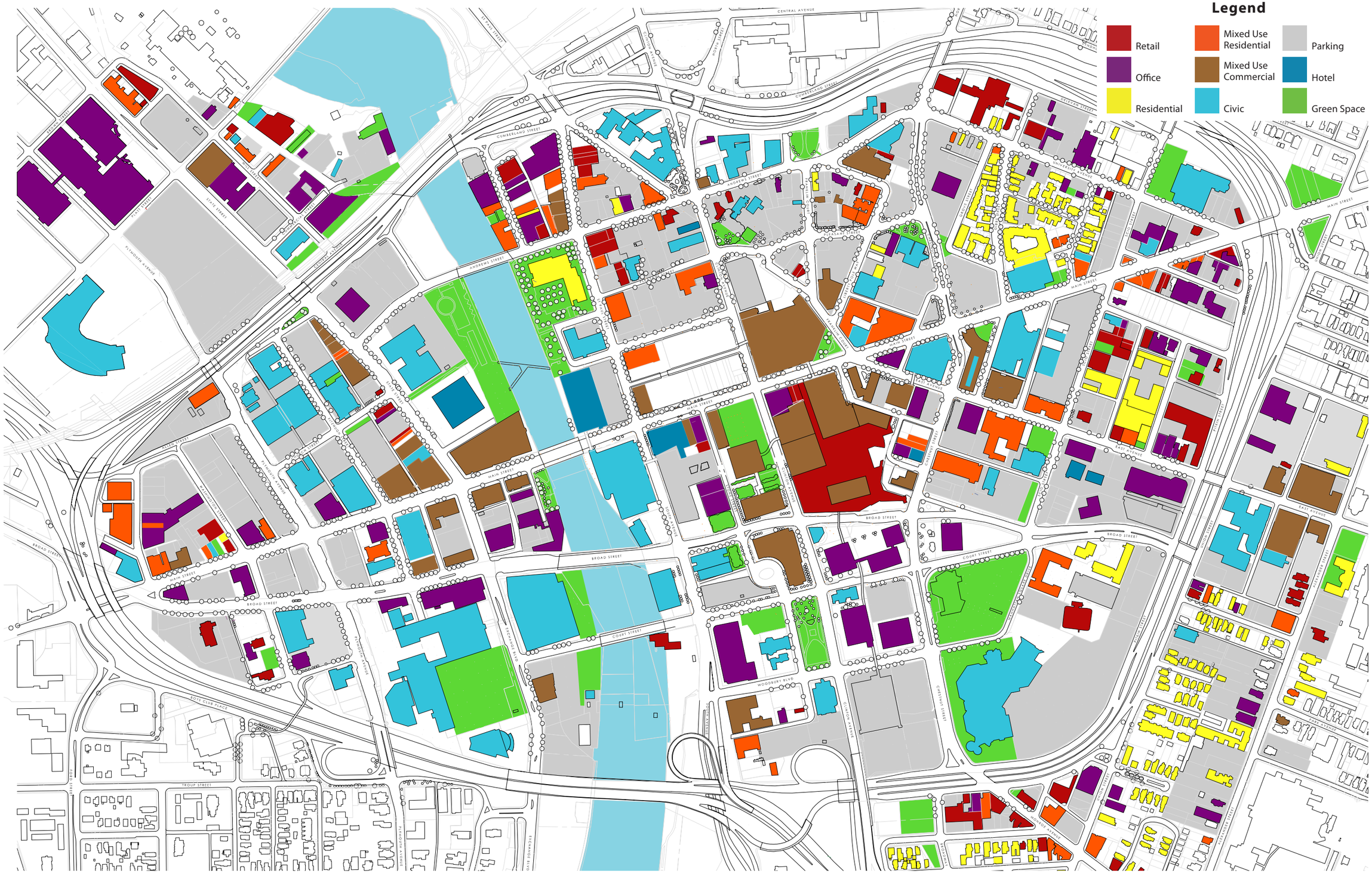
EXISTING CONDITIONS MAP FIGURE 1

The **Parcels in Public Ownership Map** (Figure 2 below) gives useful information about the amount of private versus government-owned property in the downtown. Relatively few properties that are publicly owned, other than green space, are evident on the entire east side of the Genesee River in the downtown. The **Land Use Map** (Figure 3 on right) gives important information about the current usage of sites: retail, office, residential, mixed-use residential, mixed-use commercial, civic, parking, hotel and green space. Readily apparent is the preponderance of civic buildings in the northwest and southwest quadrants, the relatively limited areas of retail, and the sizeable interruptions in the urban fabric where few or no buildings are located.

The Rascal Site, Rochester, NY.



PARCELS IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP MAP FIGURE 2



LAND USE MAP

FIGURE 3

Legend

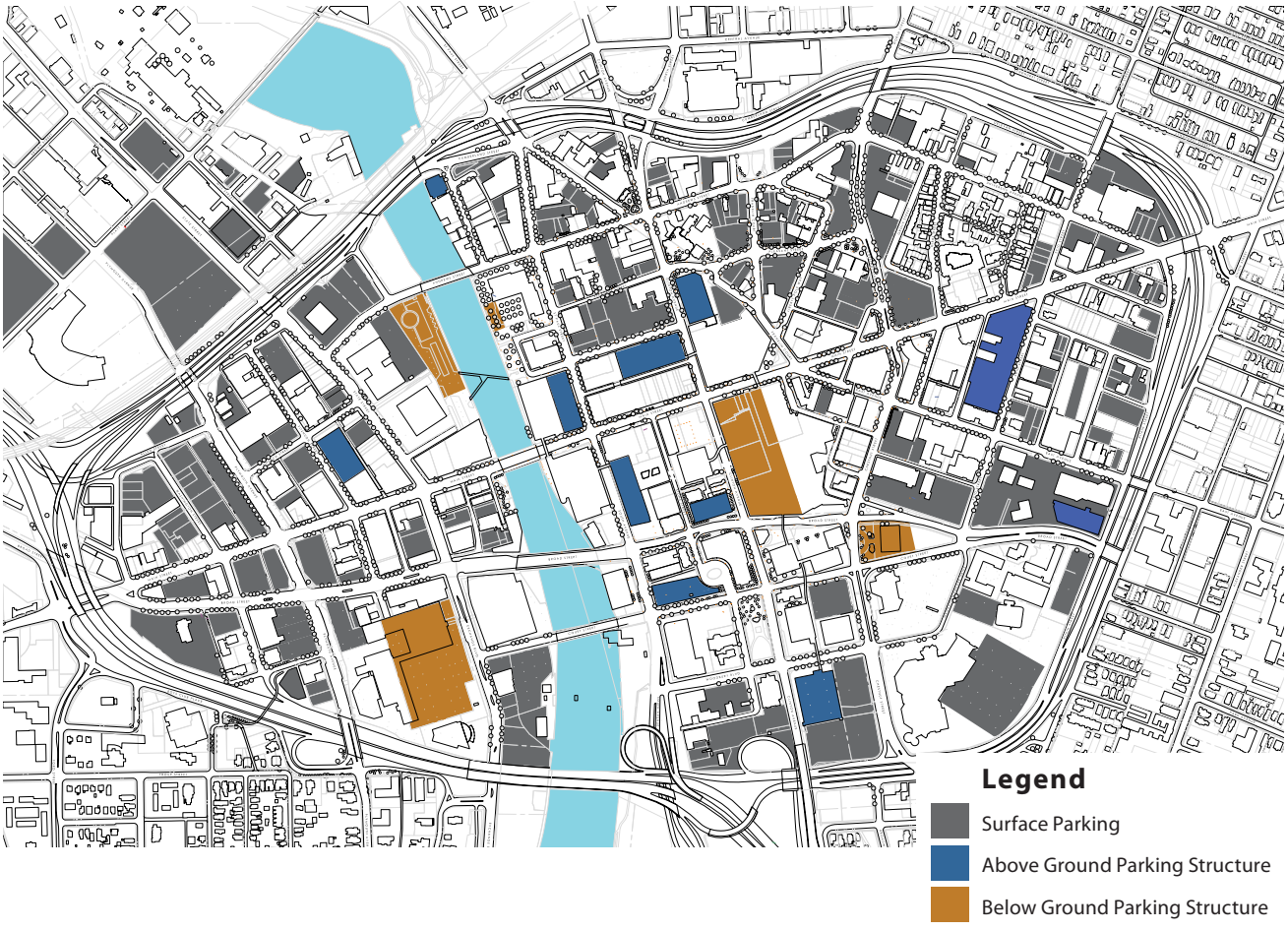
- Contributing Structure with Appropriate Contributing Use
- Contributing Structure Not Used or Underutilized
- Non-Contributing Structure with Contributing or Permanent Use
- Non-Contributing Structure with Non-Contributing Use
- Non-Contributing Structure Not Used
- Park or Open Space

STRUCTURES UTILIZATION MAP

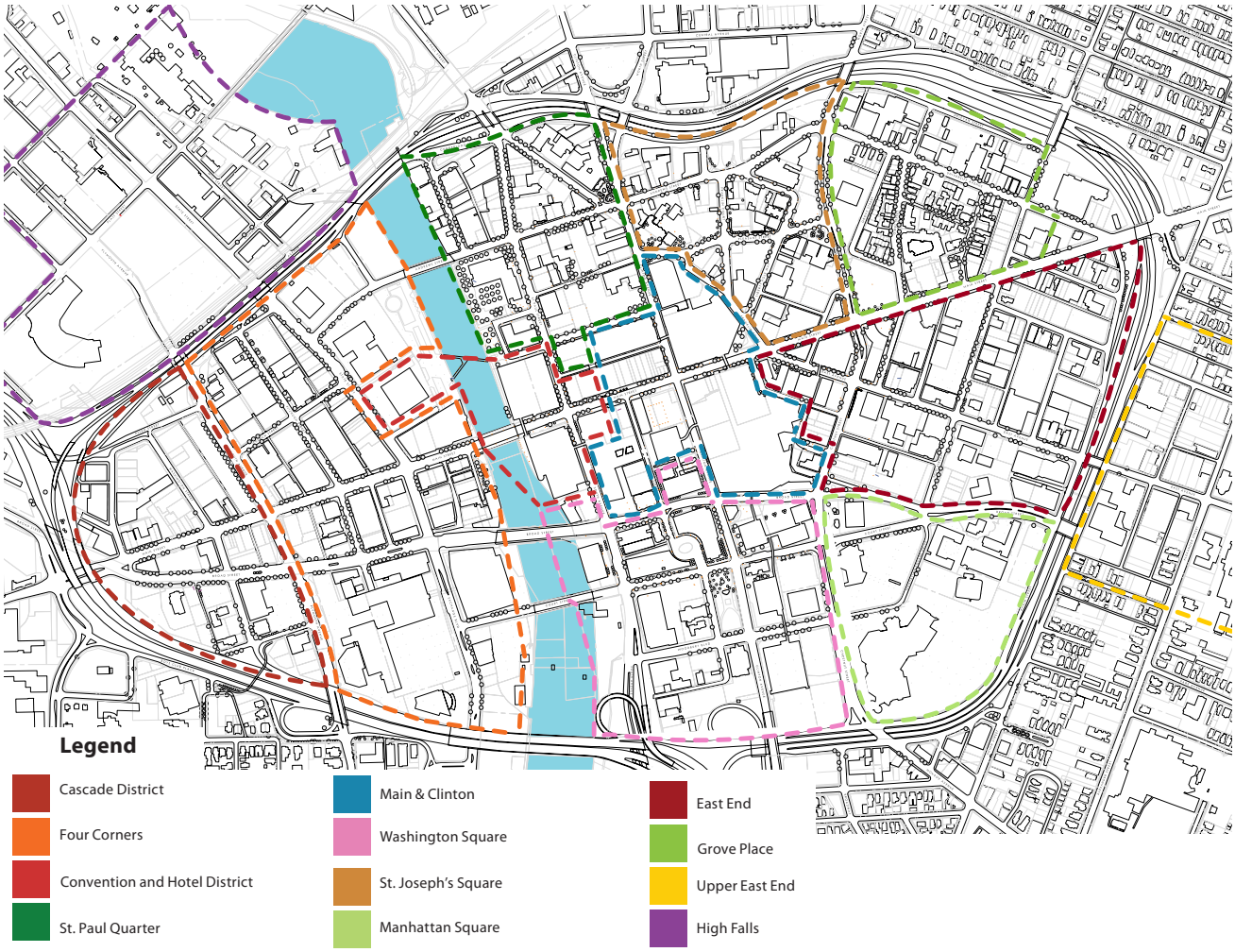
FIGURE 4

Also apparent is the dominance of land used for both parking garages and vast areas of surface parking lots found throughout the downtown. Types and locations of parking facilities, garage and surface, are delineated in the **Downtown Parking Facilities Map** (Figure 5 below).

The **Structures Utilization Map** (Figure 4 on left) features an analysis of extant structures in the downtown, including existing green spaces, which are rather sparse as noted by the Urban Land Institute panel in their visit here in June 2005. Structures contributing to the public realm, those being put to good use, either in their original function or as being adaptively reused, are distributed throughout all four quadrants of the city. A large concentration of these buildings are located in the southeast quadrant as well as clusters along the St. Paul/South Avenue and Genesee River corridors, in the Four Corners and Cultural Districts. Conversely, there are significant areas of underutilized property in all four quadrants. Developing underutilized sites, and connecting those areas of viability within each quadrant, should be a primary planning goal. This can be done by addressing the entire length of Main Street and the major crossing and connecting streets, (East Avenue, Clinton Avenue, St. Paul/South Avenue, State/Exchange Street, Plymouth Avenue) along with the Genesee River Corridor. Attention should begin at Main Street and work outward, north and south. Concentrating on strengthening these spines will have a catalytic effect on development, creating strong axial areas of connected intact urban fabric.



DOWNTOWN PARKING FACILITIES MAP FIGURE 5



DISTRICTS MAP

FIGURE 6

Another key goal should be to connect and link districts and neighborhoods (**Districts Map**, Figure 6 above), expanding high quality street frontages to unify each other, improving the pedestrian experience, and enhancing the overall quality, integrity and aesthetics of these downtown corridors. Building frontage, that portion of a structure where the building meets the sidewalk, is a critical interface providing a sense of enclosure, defining and giving form to the public realm. Commercial storefronts, residential porches and stoops all provide a positive pedestrian experience and enrich the public realm. Blank walls, unscreened parking garages and open parking lots provide the most negative pedestrian experience and degrade the public realm.

Active streetscape, Stratford, Ontario.

High Quality Street Frontage

Mixed-use Sagamore Building, Rochester, NY.

Armory Square, Syracuse, NY.

Southside District, Pittsburgh, PA.

Poor Quality Street Frontage

IBM Building, Rochester, NY.

Upper Falls Shopping Center, Rochester, NY.

East Main Street, Rochester, NY.

The **Street Frontages Map** (Figure 7 on right) identifies areas of high quality and potential quality, as well as gaps where intervention is needed. This information can be used to guide the planning of targeted improvements.

The **Street Frontages Map** illustrates areas of historic and intact, high quality urban fabric and architecture, constructed primarily during the late 19th and early 20th centuries when downtown experienced its greatest period of growth. Many streets are still remarkably intact including: Main Street, between Chestnut Street and Plymouth Avenue; the north side of East Avenue, between Scio Street and Main Street; the west side of St. Paul Street, between the Inner Loop and Andrews Street; and the west side of State Street, between the Inner Loop and Church Street. There is also potential to create stronger connections between the Main & Clinton and St. Joseph's Square districts. On the west side of the Genesee River there is potential to expand upon the relatively good pedestrian environment in the Four Corners area by creating better connections to the river and the Cascade District, strengthening the link to the greater downtown. Conversely, the map points out how disconnected these areas are, separated from each other by a ragged development pattern dominated by surface parking, especially north of Sibley's and west of Plymouth Avenue.

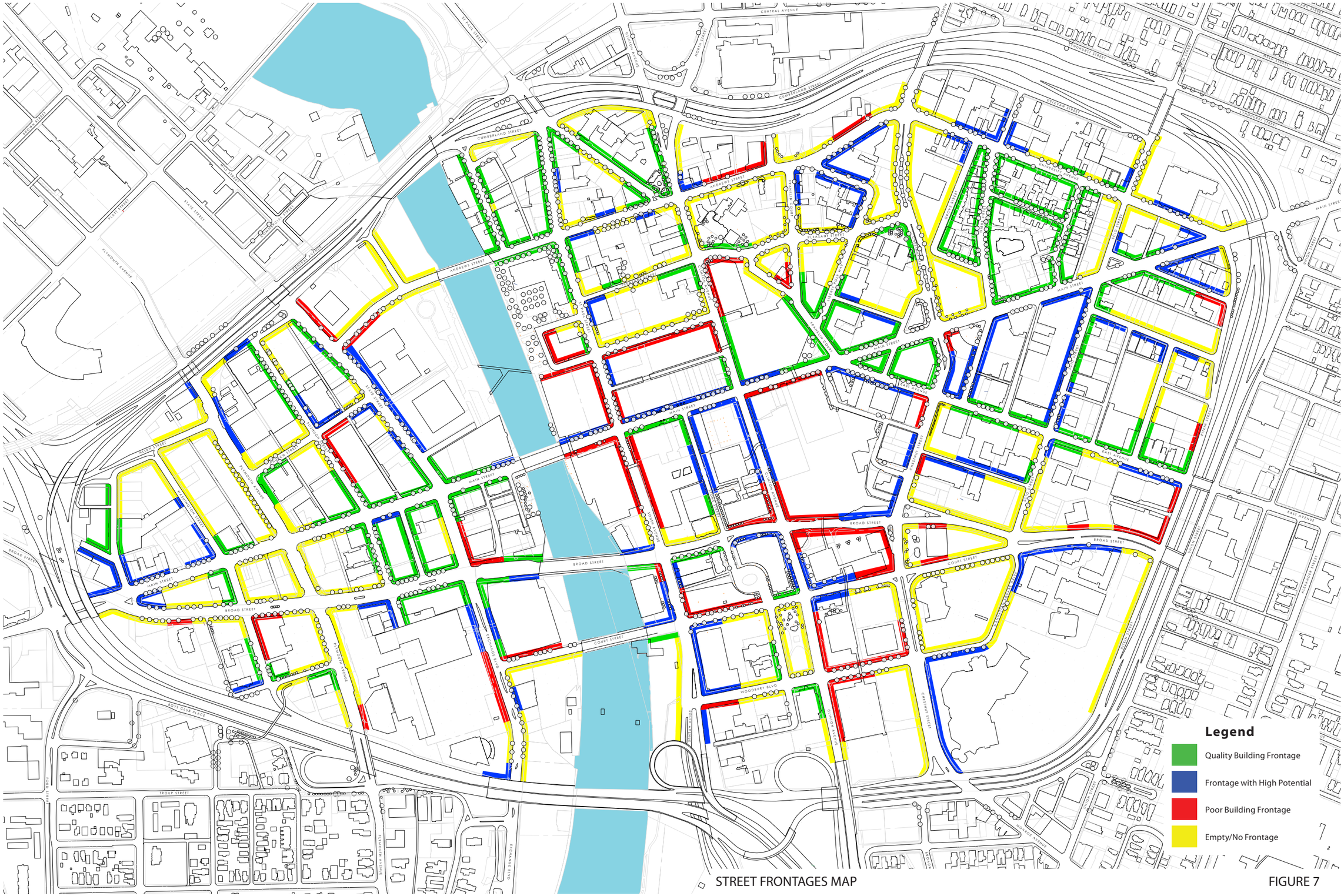
Also shown is the extent to which downtown has been negatively affected by Urban Renewal, demolition and the construction of I-490 and the Inner Loop. This is especially evident at Union Street, between Monroe Avenue and East Main Street; State Street, St. Paul Street, North Clinton Avenue, North Street and University Avenue where they intersect the Inner Loop; and West Main Street and Broad Street where they meet I-490.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The sections of "excellent frontage" combined with the sections of "high potential" frontage shown on the **Street Frontages Map** illustrate where networks of our strongest pedestrian-friendly streets exist. Evident are the numerous gaps in high quality frontage between these districts, neighborhoods and areas of viability. Large scale remediation of these poor frontage sections will complete a downtown-wide interconnected network of pedestrian-oriented streets. The potential removal of the Inner Loop would offer an opportunity to connect East End streets with high quality frontages to neighborhoods further to the east.

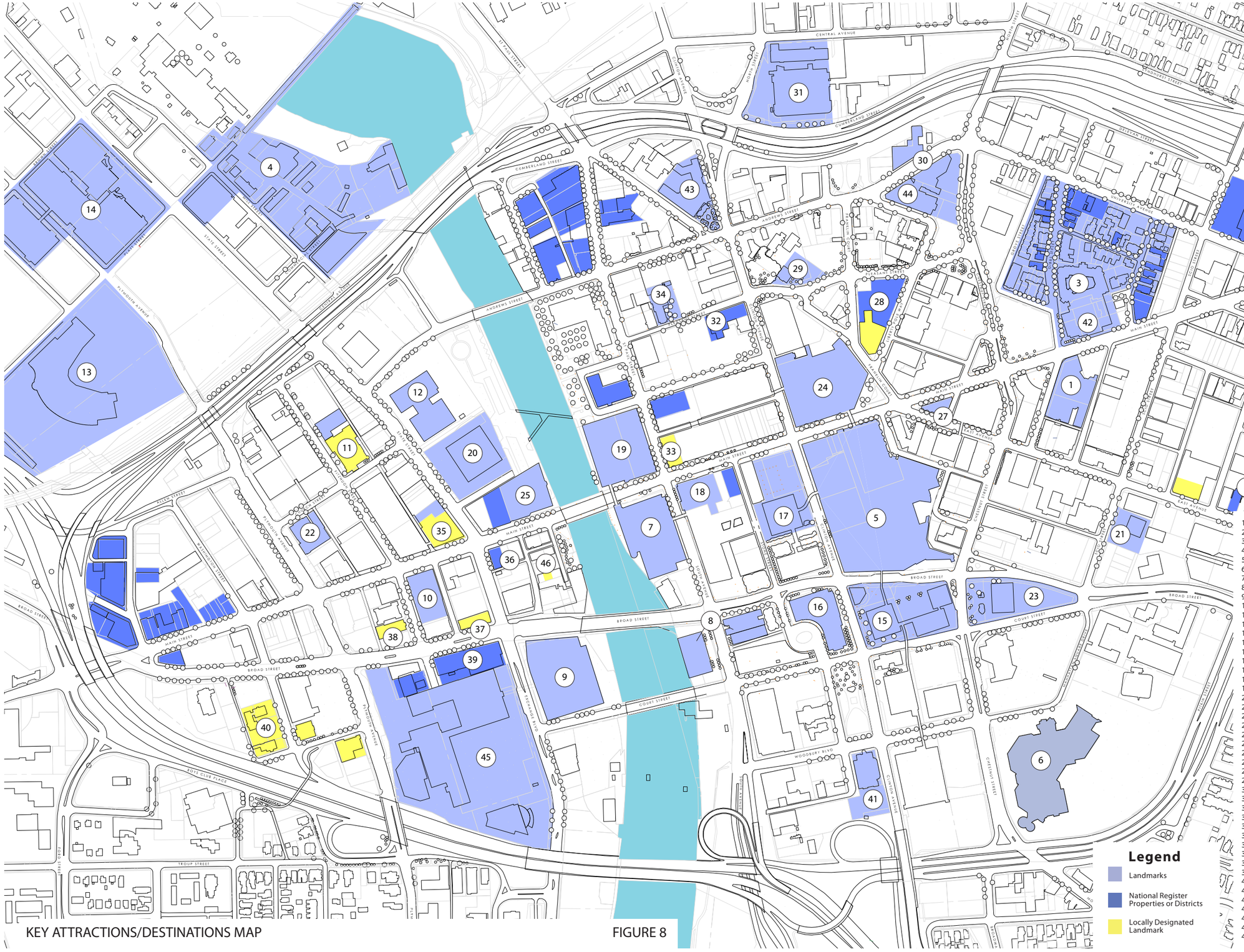
Good street frontage along Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY.

Bad street frontage along Chestnut Street, Rochester, NY.



STREET FRONTAGES MAP

FIGURE 7



KEY ATTRACTIONS/DESTINATIONS MAP

FIGURE 8

The **Key Attractions/Destinations Map** (Figure 8 on left) illustrates the clustering of these facilities in various sections of the downtown and can be instructive in identifying where paths of physical connection exist between them. Along these routes, there are opportunities for the development of businesses that can take advantage of the pedestrian traffic relative to the visitors who patronize these sites. Currently, there is a strong tendency for visitors arriving at downtown attractions and events by private vehicles to attend the event and then leave without spending any more time or money downtown. Identifying zones where retail and commercial businesses would prosper as the result of these existing attractions and destinations, and providing incentives to encourage that type of development, would be an effective economic strategy.

Some destinations/attractions are located within the most intact portions of the pedestrian network, while others are located in areas where the pedestrian network is underdeveloped. It is important that such magnets be more closely linked to their neighborhoods and the wider downtown. To achieve this goal, the pedestrian experience in some locations must improve. Increasing the amount of high quality building frontage in the vicinity of such attractions provides the opportunity for spin-off businesses to take root. In some cases, the anchors themselves should change to become more oriented to the streets that make up the public realm.

One strategy to increase pedestrian activity is to locate parking for large venues separately from the venues themselves, thus requiring patrons to take routes along sidewalks on the connecting streets to get to their cars. When a new performing arts center was constructed in Cincinnati, this strategy was implemented, resulting in more lively streets and better conditions for increasing the number of street level businesses.

High Falls District, Rochester, NY.

Eastman Theatre, Rochester, NY.

Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY.

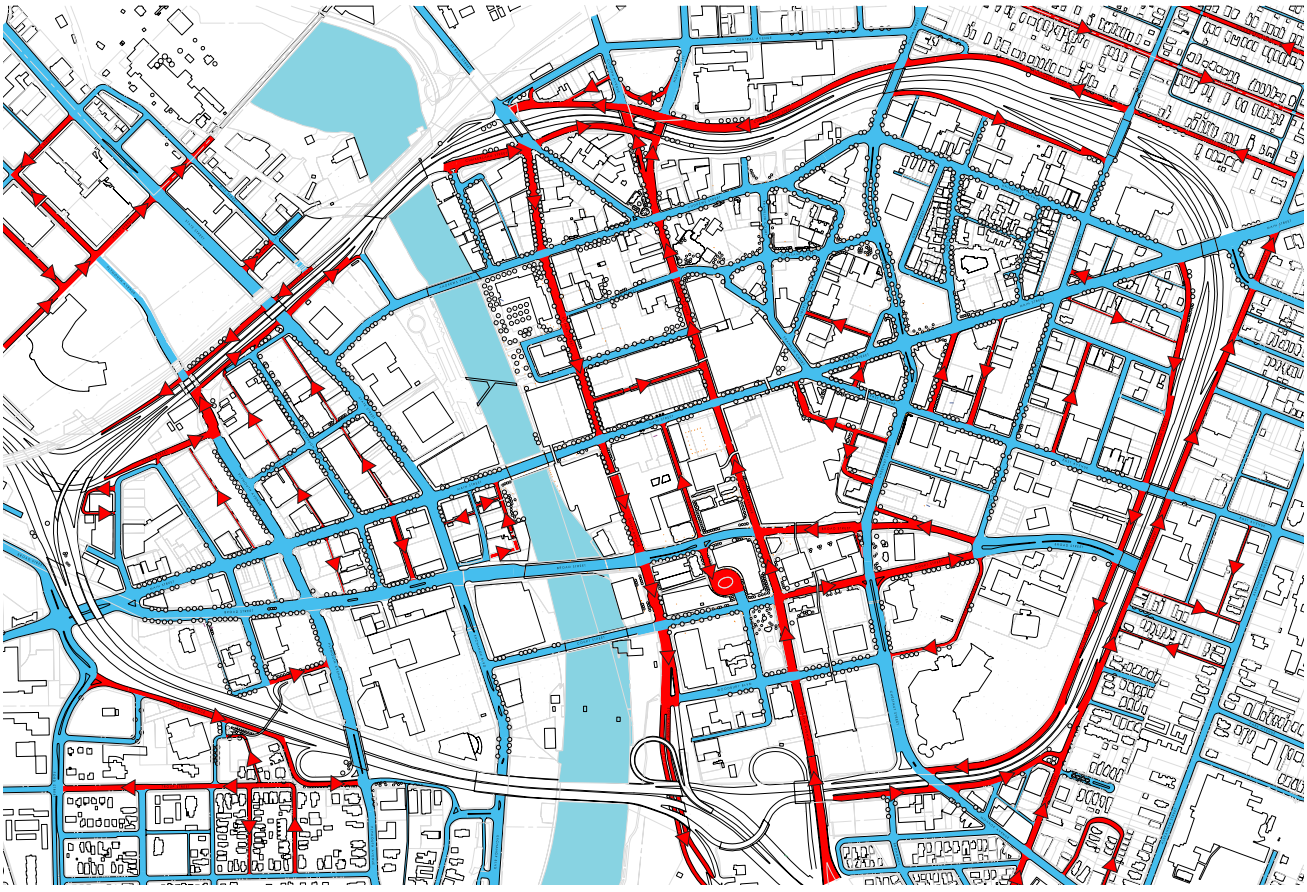
The **Downtown Pedestrian Shed Map** (Figure 9 below), using radial distances from a point, illustrates relative distance/time relationships: a quarter mile radius equates to a five minute walk; a half mile radius a ten minute walk. This information is important as we help downtown to achieve its potential as an integrated walkable urban environment. It influences how we accommodate parking and where we concentrate on streetscape enhancements incorporating pedestrian-friendly amenities. The overall size of downtown warrants the introduction of some form of downtown circulator to further improve walkability and mobility within Center City.

Street circulator, San Antonio, TX.

DOWNTOWN PEDESTRIAN SHED MAP FIGURE 9

On-street parking, Tarrytown, NY.

One way to develop a more attractive downtown for visitors is to provide an easier and more effective way to navigate, circulate and park cars. One-way streets, as illustrated on the **Downtown Street Inventory Map (**Figure 10 below), and the high occurrence of no turn possibilities, contribute to a confusing and frustrating downtown driving experience. This can be addressed by eliminating most one-way streets and providing clear and attractive wayfinding signage; providing as much on-street parking as possible; and discreetly dispersing smaller parking garages around downtown.



DOWNTOWN STREET INVENTORY MAP FIGURE 10

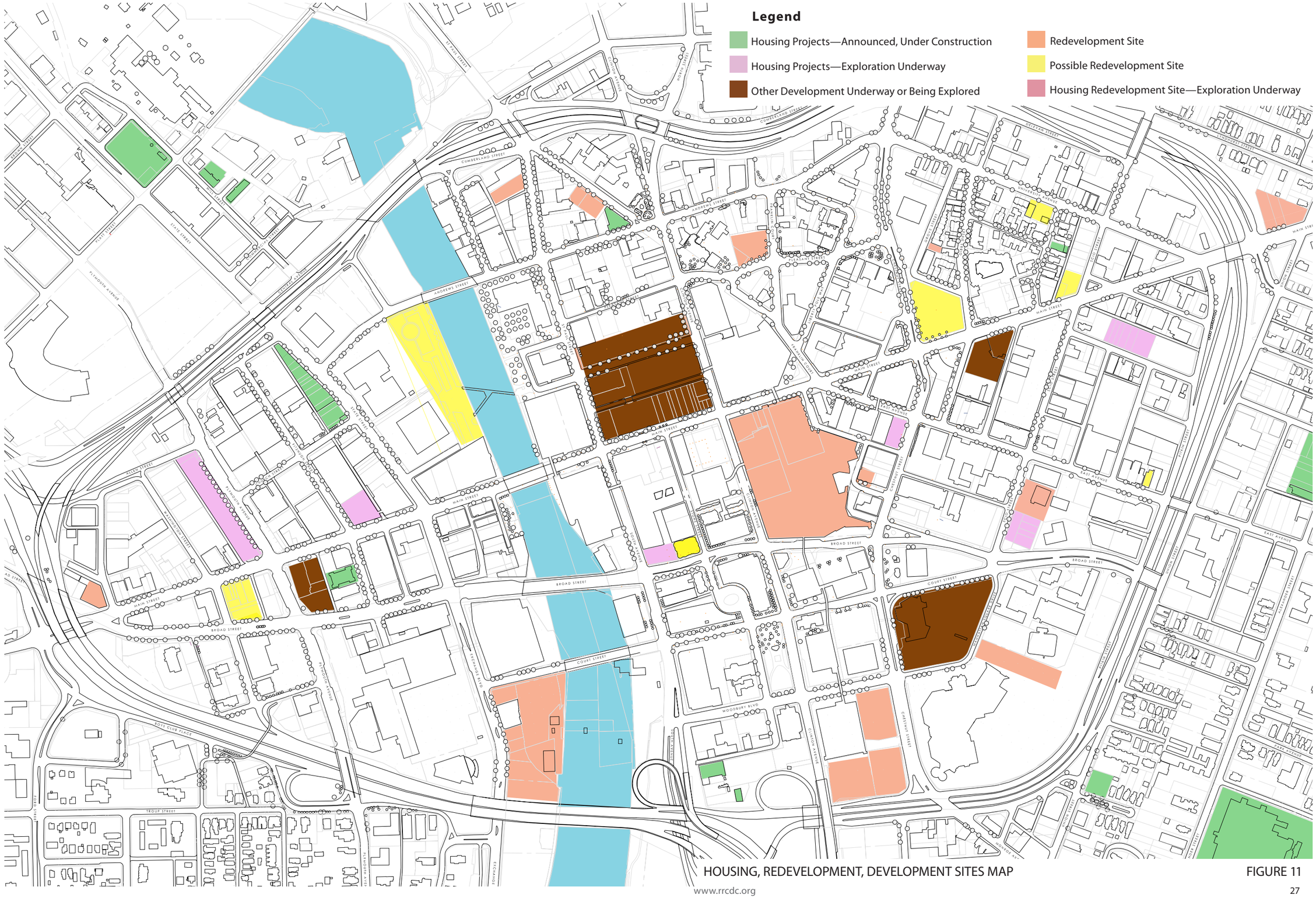
Building at Bitner and Andrews Streets, Rochester, NY.

Redevelopment site along Exchange Boulevard and the Genesee River, Rochester, NY.

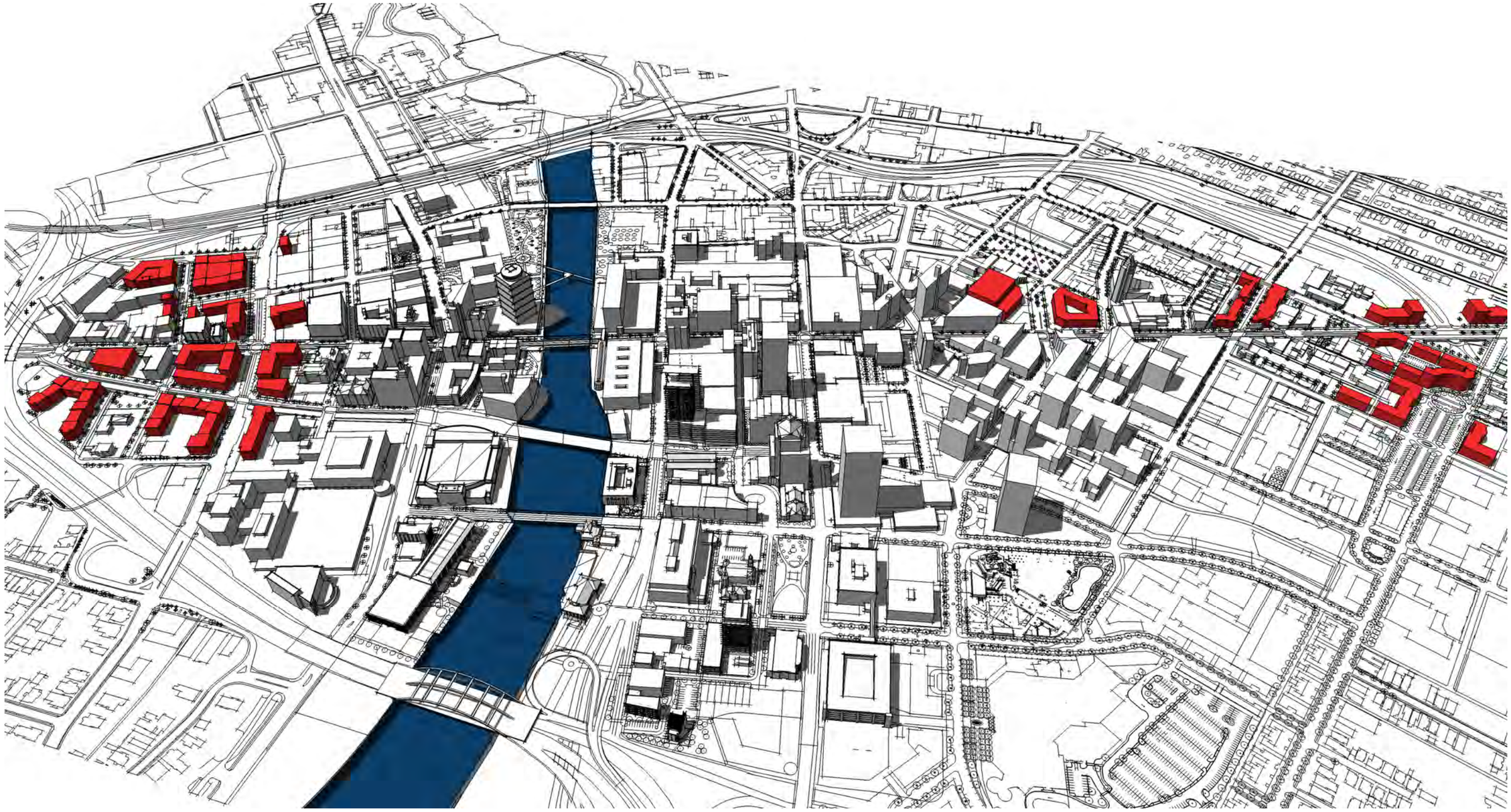
The Mills Project, Rochester, NY.

The **Development Sites Map** (Figure 11 on right) shows current redevelopment sites that are in various stages of progress: housing projects announced under construction; housing projects, both new and adaptive reuse, that are in feasibility and exploratory stages; other categories of development projects underway or being explored. This map sheds light on the ongoing and potential work that will ultimately contribute to the densification and continuity of the urban fabric in the downtown core, adding to the existing areas of viability. Filling the gaps between and within the areas of intact urban fabric, connecting neighborhoods and districts, populating and enlivening our downtown streets and making Center City more viable for retail businesses, workers, residents, students and visitors, is a strong central goal. ▲

The Mills Project under construction, Rochester, NY.



HOUSING, REDEVELOPMENT, DEVELOPMENT SITES MAP FIGURE 11



MAIN STREET MASSING STUDY

FIGURE 12

Post-Charrette Work

I: Summary of Guiding Principles

II: Focus Areas

III: Recommendations Summary

Summary of Guiding Principles

The 2007 Downtown Charrette findings have been categorized into eight Guiding Principles that are recommended to serve as a framework for development in the downtown over the next several decades. Key are strategic partnerships and an agreed upon coordinated approach and agenda for private and public sector projects and initiatives. A common goal and focus is to provide high quality projects, amenities and targeted infrastructure improvements that will create a livable downtown community, generating economic growth and tourism. Future projects should be planned to maximize their catalytic effect in downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Downtown should offer a vibrant, rich pedestrian experience that will continually attract businesses and commerce, visitors and residents.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ENHANCE the Pedestrian Experience
CONNECT Distinctive Districts, Neighborhoods and Key Sites
GREEN the Downtown
FOCUS on Main Street
DEVELOP the River as a Central Feature
CREATE Mixed-use Neighborhoods
CONSTRUCT Major and Minor Gateways
IMPLEMENT a Strategic Planning Effort

Genesee River, the I-490 Bridge, and downtown Rochester.

Enhance the Pedestrian Experience

Pedestrian activity is the lifeblood of a vibrant and healthy downtown. Downtown streets should be designed as "complete streets" that serve the needs of transit, bicyclists and vehicles, but with the focus on serving pedestrians first. We need to create an interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly streets edged by continuous high quality building frontages that engage the pedestrian. All new building, street and other public works projects should be required to contribute to the quality of the pedestrian experience. Green spaces and landscaping are integral to a positive pedestrian experience. Attractive street furniture, bike racks, decorative paving and artwork can enhance and encourage pedestrian activity. A circulator transit system can expand the pedestrian shed and encourage denser development. A successful downtown is a pedestrian oriented downtown.

Modify downtown streets and sidewalks to serve the needs of pedestrians, transit, bicyclists and vehicles, with the focus on serving pedestrians first:

- Design streets appropriate for their function: remove excess traffic lanes; institute traffic calming measures, such as bump outs, where

Streetscape, Stratford, Ontario.

appropriate; simplify lane layout; install computer controlled traffic signals;
- Remove the underutilized southeast portion of Inner Loop, creating opportunities for mixed-use/residential development and better connections to adjacent neighborhoods;
- Establish new streets where appropriate; improve the interconnectedness of pedestrian and vehicular circulation system to diffuse traffic more efficiently throughout the street grid and to create more development opportunities;
- Create active transparent first floor retail uses in strategic locations;
- Convert one-way streets to two-way to calm traffic, improve pedestrian safety, and make it easier to understand and negotiate the urban street grid;
- Include amenities such as decorative lighting, street furniture, street trees and plantings, way-finding signage, awnings, artwork, decorative paving, information kiosks, transit shelters, and banners in the public right-of-way to support and encourage pedestrian activity;
- Provide bicycle racks and other related facilities throughout downtown to support and encourage bicycling.

Recognize parking as essential urban infrastructure, whose proper design and location is critical to the success of downtown:

- Provide on-street parking throughout downtown. Do not prohibit on-street parking except where there are compelling reasons to do so. On-street parking is an economic generator, provides a buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians, and has a traffic calming effect;
- Construct new parking garages at strategic locations throughout downtown. Garages should be smaller and evenly distributed for the convenience and ease of pedestrian use;
- Design new garages to be masked by liner buildings (for at least two stories) with street-oriented retail and commercial uses. Provide clearly marked pedestrian access corridors to streets or public spaces;
- Encourage monitored shared parking with private commercial garages open to the public whenever possible. Garages for residential use should be restricted and secure;
- Provide a coordinated signage program to direct drivers and identify public parking facilities;
- Institute a parking management program: identify optimal pricing structure; install modern technology for payment by credit card, cell

Southside Fountain Square, Pittsburgh, PA.

Sister Cities parking garage, Rochester, NY.

phone, etc., at meters and in garages;
- Parking lots that remain open to the street should be effectively screened with fencing and landscaping;
- All parking garages and their access routes used by the public should be designed to be extremely pedestrian friendly. Rehabilitate existing parking structures as necessary;
- Eventually an electric street car system should be constructed to first serve Main Street, with the capability of being expanded to designated outlying destinations (High Falls, University of Rochester, Charlotte, etc.);
- Identify locations where surface parking can be integrated into and become part of civic open spaces.

Screened surface parking lot on East Avenue, Rochester, NY.

Transition from automobile dependency to a balanced transportation system:

- Emphasize and encourage public transit instead of the automobile for those who come downtown on a regular basis;
- Explore opportunities for a mix of public transportation options, including some form of light rail transit to connect downtown with other centers and destinations in the region;
- Implement a downtown circulator transit service to enable residents, workers and visitors to move around downtown without the use of their cars. Such a service must run frequently (five minute headways are best) and stop at appropriate major city and downtown destinations. Vehicles should be small, attractive, and run on some type of alternative non-petroleum based fuel;
- Encourage taxis and car sharing services such as Zipcar as alternatives to private car use;
- Build a new train station, recognizing that intracity rail travel will be making a significant comeback in the near future.

High Falls pedestrian connectivity, Rochester, NY.

Heritage trolley, Memphis, TN.

Connect Distinctive Districts, Neighborhoods and Anchors

Downtown Rochester has tremendous assets that should be celebrated and integrated into cohesive districts and neighborhoods. Connecting neighborhoods with infill development and strategically located pedestrian destinations will create a continuous network of safe, attractive streets and sidewalks that will provide a sense of completeness for our downtown. The addition of a way-finding system will encourage pedestrians to explore our downtown's distinctive attractions and districts. We should create plazas, squares and parks that can become focal points for neighborhoods. Our historic architecture provides the character that makes downtown distinctive and unique. It should be preserved and recycled for modern uses. Removing the southeast section of the Inner Loop will make it possible to connect downtown to some of the city's finest neighborhoods, create a center for the East End district and substantially increase residential development.

Utilize existing streets to forge strong pedestrian connections:

- Connect viable districts and neighborhoods that are currently separated by large areas of vacant or underutilized land by strategically identified development projects creating a continuous network of safe and attractive pedestrian-friendly streets;
- Enhance the public realm by including amenities such as decorative lighting, street furniture, street trees and plantings, etc., to support and encourage pedestrian activity;
- Install a way-finding system to provide direction and identity for downtown's distinct attractions and destinations;
- Establish destinations worth walking to at important points throughout the street network.

Create new civic open green spaces to provide focal points for districts and neighborhoods:

- Make each green space unique to its neighborhood through the design and installation of art works, fountains, landscaping, lighting, pavements, etc. Establish consistent design parameters for green spaces across Center City to promote a unified downtown identity;
- Plazas, squares and parks enhance the value of adjoining properties. Use civic green spaces to create dignified settings and prestigious addresses for new developments;
- Maximize the impact of new civic green space through design excellence, density, and a high quality architectural edge;
- Remove or remediate barriers that separate neighborhoods and districts.

Battery Park City, New York City, NY.

Bryant Park, New York City, NY.

- Remove the southeast portion of the Inner Loop to allow the East End to seamlessly connect to adjacent neighborhoods;
- As appropriate, construct new streets to break up exceedingly large blocks and create better linkages within and between neighborhoods;
- Make streets narrower to unite rather than divide districts (as was done on University Avenue);
- Enhance and create new bridge connections across the Genesee River that focus on the pedestrian.

Identify important anchor buildings, sites and districts, and develop them to contribute to the public realm:

- Encourage the redesign of existing buildings that are self-contained, inwardly focused complexes that turn their backs on the remainder of downtown. New buildings should be designed to connect to the urban fabric in a strong positive manner;
- Buildings should be oriented to the street, incorporating entrances and auxiliary ground level uses that will generate pedestrian activity;
- Fine historic architecture should be celebrated and preserved. New buildings should be designed to high architectural standards, harmonizing with the surrounding urban fabric;
- Key buildings should present a public face to adjoining green spaces by providing a connection to the street edge, where possible, and opportunities for outdoor activities such as dining, markets, festivals, etc.;
- Continuity of architecture that frames the public realm is desired and infill development should be encouraged and promoted;
- Improving the pedestrian quality of streets and civic spaces is fundamental to successful connectivity.

Santana Row, San Jose, CA.

Michael Stern Building, Rochester, NY.

Streetscape, Providence, RI.

Green the Downtown

The desire for a greener downtown was consistently expressed by the Downtown Charrette participants. Envisioned is a downtown with an abundance of substantial urban street trees, tree lawns, plantings and flowers; a greater amount of civic green spaces evenly distributed throughout Center City; at least one large civic green space for community gatherings; and buildings that are designed to be ecologically sensitive. Such an environment would add a magnetic dimension of natural quality to the public realm, attracting the region's populace for this asset alone (similar to Savannah, Georgia).

Greening has a positive effect on the environment, the human spirit and the aesthetic quality of the public realm:

- The greening of downtown would make the public realm a much more desirable place, attracting more people to live, work and play in Center City. This would, of course, lead to economic, social and environmental benefits;
- A greener downtown would have a positive psychological benefit for the participants of the downtown experience;
- The ecological benefits of a greener downtown are the enhancement of the quality of the natural environment and the health of its participants;
- Providing a greener background to downtown would increase social interaction among citizens by providing more opportunities for civic engagement;
- Construct a major civic green space meant to accommodate large community gatherings (redesign Genesee Crossroads Park).

Develop a "Green Plan" articulating a detailed series of traditional green elements to be provided in the built environment of Center City:

- Implement an aggressive street tree planting and maintenance program along with related tree grate/tree lawn planting areas. Prioritize the importance of public realm corridors for major tree plantings;
- Increase the number of planting beds, planters, and hanging baskets for displaying flowers;
- Develop new civic green spaces of varying sizes located strategically throughout Center City;
- Create dense edges around greens and squares wherever feasible to intensify economic value;
- Redesign existing underutilized civic green spaces that are marginally functional, not easily accessible, or poorly designed (i.e. Chase Square, Genesee Crossroads Park);
- Encourage formation of private/public partnerships to implement redesign of privately owned greens and squares for increased public use (i.e. Chase Square);

Corn Hill neighborhood, Rochester, NY.

Urban park, Memphis, TN.

- Connect civic green spaces with strong, distinct green corridors (i.e. streets, river, canal, pedestrian ways);
- Develop strategies for winter and night time use.

Create green design strategies for special areas of the built and natural environment in Center City not considered traditional urban fabric:

- Encourage developers and architects to support the design of "green" buildings and green building systems. Strive for LEED certification for each new or remodeled building in the downtown;
- Take advantage of the features and ecosystems in the more natural areas within Center City, such as the Genesee River and Upper Falls;
- Explore the development of an active or passive canal system along the historic downtown route of the original Erie Canal including the Broad Street Bridge. Design as a catalytic economic development engine as well as a visual green entity;
- Create a green, fully connected pedestrian corridor along both sides of the Genesee River.

The LEED-certified Medical Arts Building, Rochester, NY.

Focus on Main Street

Historic pictures of Downtown show that Main Street was an architectural gem and a hub of activity. The desire to return to this glory and vibrancy is often expressed by the citizenry of this community. It was a powerful physical space and continues to attract and inspire in spite of the many demolitions that have reduced the extent of its impact. Encouraging and directing new construction of the scale and quality of the core area of Main Street would enhance and extend its character, making it even more of a visual and economic attraction. Main Street is timeless and, as such, deserves the community's undivided attention.

Build on the strength of the excellence of downtown architecture:

- Highlight those fine examples of quality architecture that enrich the Main Street corridor from one end to the other through preservation techniques. Design infill architecture to respect the street's historic fabric;
- Revitalize Main Street by capitalizing on its fine inherent existing physical qualities;
- Build on the fact that Main Street is in the very heart of the city;

Historic Main Street, Rochester, NY.

- Enhance major cross streets and intersections. Main Street is bisected by several corridors that extend out to the populated surrounding region providing easy direct access to downtown;
- The ends of Main Street, past the I-490 bridge on the west and Union Street to the east, continues in an almost straight line through populated neighborhoods for a considerable distance each way—to Winton Road to the east and Chili to the west (via Bulls Head). These ends could be built out further with higher density housing that would feed into downtown;
- The Main Street corridor is surrounded by existing housing developments, projects under construction, and potential future residential/mixed-use neighborhoods, providing the opportunity for a 24/7 downtown;
- The other major public realm corridor, the Genesee River, passes under the Main Street corridor, a grand natural amenity that should be better integrated into the public realm;
- The height of buildings along much of the length of Main Street create a dynamic urban room evocative of the grand, lively cities of Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, etc. This scale should be maintained from end to end of the downtown;
- The linear quality of Main Street with its dense quality architectural edge gives it a unique and definitive "sense of place" that, if redeveloped properly, would attract people;
- The width of Main Street is ideal (90' to 100') for the commingling of a variety of modes of pedestrian and vehicular transportation;
- The linear quality, relatively flat topography, and connections to major streets offers important opportunities for rail transit systems (i.e. trolley) that should be seriously considered for downtown.

To realize the economic potential of Main Street, strategies and enhancements should be planned to ensure its becoming a prime attraction and "place to be" for the region:

- Make the revitalization of Main Street to be a destination the top priority in the development of Center City;
- Completely build out Main Street in accordance with the Center City and Charrette Vision Plans;
- Follow all of the Guiding Principles in the planning of a renewed Main Street;
- Create a detailed Main Street Design Plan and Design Standards (building upon the current downtown zoning code standards and guidelines) that would address the architectural edge; street and building lighting, street and

Fifth Avenue, New York City, NY.

State Street, Chicago, IL.

building signage, green elements, paving, street furniture, traffic control, and public art;
- Plan and develop a pedestrian friendly vehicular circulation system to connect major attractions, hotels, neighborhoods, convention center, and cultural amenities. Plan and develop a rail trolley system for Main St. that could be expanded to other areas of Center City and beyond;
- Develop a definitive, systematic plan for the design and installation of civic art;
- Update and implement the 2002 wayfinding plan developed by Corbin Associates;
- Develop strategies, events, and attractions that would bring more people to Main Street (IMAX theater, museum, etc.);
- Insist that new construction along Main Street be as dense, as tall (8-10 stories typically, occasionally to 20 stories), and as continuous as possible. Enforce current design guidelines and create new design standards to ensure this criteria;
- Develop Main Street as a dense mixed-use street to complement the adjacent housing, but concentrate marketing and promotional efforts to focus on office, commercial, retail, cultural, and entertainment activities;
- Develop a streetscape enhancement plan that would encourage the inclusion of awnings (1st story and upper floor windows), marquees, sidewalk dining, street vendors, and street entertainment;
- Develop and implement an aggressive Main Street promotion plan;
- Implement strategies to intensify and properly design first floor retail and second floor commercial;
- Consider tax incentivized retail zones at appropriate places;
- Design traffic circulation to be as simple as possible, favoring the pedestrian all along the corridor.

Wayfinding signage, San Antonio, TX.

Storefronts, Brooklyn, NY.

Streetscape, San Francisco, CA.

Develop the River as a Central Feature

Besides Main Street, the other unique public realm entity which defines Rochester is the Genesee River Corridor. Like Main Street, it is extremely underutilized in comparison to rivers in other cities in our country (Milwaukee, San Antonio, Providence, Chicago, etc.). Historically the Genesee River has acted as a resource for industry, been used as a sewer, provided power for turbines and water wheels, and much of our heritage and built environment has resulted from that fact. Since the buildings on the Main Street Bridge were removed the river has been more visible, enhancing its presence as a natural resource for pedestrian enjoyment.

This river could become a major economic engine for the Rochester downtown. Designating public and private investment capital for its physical development and enhancement would return huge economic dividends to our community. Such development would attract a multitude of people to the river's edge to live, work, and play. It is important that it be easy to walk the entire length of the river in the Center City on each side.

The river gorge below the Upper Falls takes on a completely different character than that above the falls—it is more natural, difficult to get to, impressive to look at from various vantage points, is in need of environmental remediation in areas, and is edged by large architecturally significant structures (Beebe Station, High Falls Brewery). This area, coupled with the High Falls District, could become a major regional draw in the future if creatively and strategically planned for.

A continuous well-structured promotional campaign built around the area's history, natural amenities, and interesting activities will be essential to the success of creating the Genesee River as a destination for the region.

Intensify public access to the river corridor, creating a continuous walkway on both sides of the river from Corn Hill and South Wedge to High Falls:

- Phase the River Walk construction beginning at the Main Street Bridge and working systematically both north and south;
- In some locations (i.e. Rundel Library, Thompson-Reuters building), walkways will need to be constructed along existing buildings using cantilever or pier placement techniques;
- Where streets intersect with the river, create inviting architectural gateway features that identify and highlight their entry points, attracting

Erie Canal Aqueduct, Rochester, NY.

Riverwalk, Milwaukee, WI.

and supporting pedestrian use of the River Walk;
- Create stronger pedestrian connections to the river from St. Paul Street;
- Develop additional civic green spaces along the river;
- Redesign and rebuild Genesee Crossroads Park, as recommended in the City Design Charrette of 2002, to function as a major civic gathering space.

Encourage mixed-use/residential development wherever possible along the river:

- Encourage mixed-use/residential development on available sites along the river at a density at least as great as Corn Hill Landing (3–4 story buildings);
- For sites that currently are not available for residential development but would be prime candidates in the future, begin to lay the groundwork for their potential eventual mixed-use development (Time Warner site, Federal Building, etc.);
- Create strategies for the full, active, and continued development of the High Falls District (i.e. residential, family oriented, entertainment), including strengthening the architectural edge of High Falls along the rim of the river gorge;
- Create design strategies and development opportunities for the properties along the east rim of the river gorge.

River Walk, San Antonio, TX.

Provide access to the lower river gorge thereby creating an exciting new destination and view of the falls for the public:

- Install an elevator, funicular, incline, or similar conveyance to provide access to the lands along the river at the base of Upper Falls. Develop these lands for recreational use that respects the scenic natural environment;
- Set aside lands north of the Pont de Rennes Bridge as a wildlife sanctuary;
- Develop the lower gorge in a more natural and eco-sensitive manner;
- In partnership with Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E), develop feasible adaptive re-use

River at Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, KS.

River Park, Milwaukee, WI.

schemes for Beebe Station for the future. (Possible models might be the former power stations in Baltimore, Cleveland, Providence, and New Orleans);
- Create strong pedestrian connections to High Falls and the Genesee River from State Street, Frontier Field, and Kodak;
- Fully develop and aggressively market this area as a destination for the region.

Create new uses and activities along the river:

- Wherever possible develop active building frontages along the edge of the River Walk (providing space for businesses and restaurants) to attract and encourage pedestrian activity. (Upper floors might include a mix of office and residential uses);
- Program activities in riverfront parks such as concerts, markets and festivals which occur on a regular basis to help activate the use of the riverfront areas.

Waterfire, Providence, RI.

Create Mixed-use Neighborhoods

In the last fifteen years, Center City has seen a proliferation of housing projects which has buoyed optimism for the future of downtown. Although this trend is very positive, especially when coupled with the encouraging conclusions of the City-wide housing study of 2007, it is clear that scattered, separated housing enclaves will not generate a sustainable built environment for Center City. A planning strategy that should be aggressively pursued is that of building dense, compact, mixed-use/residential neighborhoods, not just random housing projects.

Townhomes and courtyard, Chicago, IL.

Corn Hill neighborhood, Rochester, NY.

A neighborhood environment is much different and more desirable than just a housing project because it offers the value of a "sense of place":

- A neighborhood can be predictable and sustainable if planned and designed properly, has the potential to consistently increase in value, and become more economically sustainable;
- A dense neighborhood will be more likely to attract a variety of complementary mixed-uses—coffee shop, deli, live/work spaces, laundromat, etc.;
- A neighborhood is a perfect place for supporting and complementing an urban transit/trolley system thereby increasing its appeal and value;
- Neighborhoods (not housing projects) are the recognized building blocks of communities.

The opportunities for the development of a variety of mixed-use/residential neighborhoods in Center City are quite extensive in their capacity to energize underutilized sites:

- Create definitive vision and regulating plans for each neighborhood (Broad Street Canal, Cascade, St. Joseph, Washington Square, Southeast Loop, Gibbs/Grove, High Falls, Broadway, Chestnut Square, East End, etc.) that develop unique identity for each;
- The city plays a significant role in creating and maintaining the public realm and should move as quickly as possible to prepare the way for neighborhood development by implementing action to clean up contaminated sites (i.e. the old Greyhound bus station) and removing noncontributing buildings (i.e. EOC);
- Develop new pedestrian focused streets and civic green spaces appropriate for each neighborhood. Green spaces should be urban in character surrounded by buildings of appropriate density and high quality architectural character.
- Install pedestrian scale lighting;
- Provide as much on-street parking as possible for visitors and residents;
- Provide secure, screened or below grade private parking for residents attached to or relatively close to housing units. Parking may be off site if conveniently located;
- Strongly connect neighborhoods within and adjacent to the downtown; connect these to Main Street and the potential trolley system where possible.

Townhouses, Brooklyn, NY.

Mixed-use neighborhood, Milwaukee, WI.

Construct Major and Minor Gateways

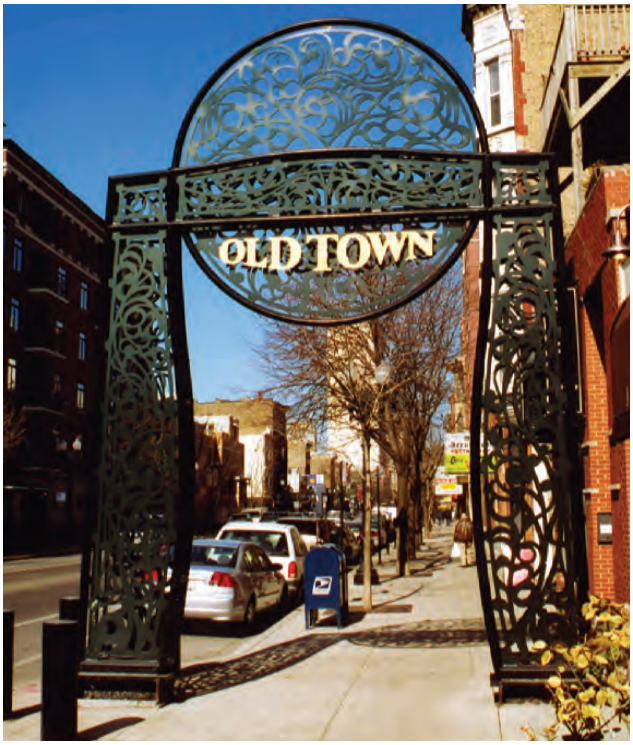
Gateways are the entrances announcing arrival into the downtown and to districts and neighborhoods within the downtown. They have a structural presence that announces, welcomes and defines key areas. Major gateways should be positioned at the entries to downtown and are more prominent than those minor gateways that identify neighborhoods and districts.

Create entrance gateways that announce arrival:

- Gateways into downtown offer an opportunity to announce arrival at a special place. Gateways can be a welcoming gesture, signifying the warmth, congeniality, personality and history of our community;
- Beautiful, thoughtfully designed gateways give a positive first impression of Center City and the community;
- Gateways can establish the personality (set the tone) for our city or district within downtown.

Develop distinctly designed gateways for our city:

- Gateway designs may employ the use of grand landscaping schemes, inspiring sculpture or other artwork, creative signage, beautiful lighting, special roadway layouts and paving materials, large changeable banners, electronic message boards, architectural elements, water features, bollards, and pylons to list a few techniques;
- Consider community participation and artistic competitions as an appropriate way to develop unique and distinctly Rochester gateways;
- Gateways may incorporate wayfinding information, historic facts or photos, and references to the natural and built environment;
- Gateways may be defined and strengthened where buildings occur that create a "portal" effect; bridges are effective places to dramatically



Old Town gateway, Chicago, IL.

Gateway entrance to neighborhood, Brighton, NY.

announce arrival into Center City;
- Gateways may be civic green spaces that visually transition from a district or neighborhood to Center City;
- Gateway designs often focus on vehicular traffic, but they should also be created for the pedestrian as well as for boat activity.

Potential gateway locations into downtown may include:

- Monroe Avenue at the current intersection with the Inner Loop
- Clinton Avenue at either end and Joseph Avenue
- Washington Street coming off of I-490
- West Main Street at the I-490 bridge
- East Main Street at the intersection with the Inner Loop
- East Avenue at Alexander Street
- University Avenue at Union Street
- St. Paul Street at the railroad bridge
- State Street at the railroad bridge
- Plymouth Avenue and I-490 exit ramp to downtown entry from the west
- Chestnut Street/North Avenue
- South Avenue
- Exchange Street at the I-490 bridge
- Plymouth Avenue
- Scio Street at University Avenue

Gateway building, Greenwich, CT.

Autocourt gateway, Chicago, IL.

Gateway to Sagamore, Rochester, NY.

Paris buildings.

Implement a Strategic Planning Effort

We can shape our city by organizing and executing the ideas outlined in these Guiding Principles. This should include an official downtown development map that encourages density, a network of pedestrian oriented streets, and the construction of infill buildings to connect and complete our downtown. Through defined implementation steps, we can shape and celebrate our city.

Create an Official "Vision" Map for Downtown:

- Show proposed changes to street systems, parks, civic spaces, buildings and the public realm;
- Advocate for plans that encourage density and use valuable sites and buildings appropriately;
- Highlight the Midtown site, the Sibley's site, Main Street, the river, urban neighborhoods, the public realm, green spaces, and sites for accommodating parking;
- Amend the current Center City Plan with changes—create Center City Plan II. Encourage adoption by City Council;
- Encourage stronger tools for better design outcomes (i.e. modify design standards, move closer to a form based code, give Project Review Committee more authority);
- Advocate for updating the Center City Plan every five years (process should take no more than six months time);
- Organize a plan for implementation;
- Engage citizens and stakeholders in the strategic planning process. Provide opportunities for interaction with the public to get feedback on issues involving future plans for downtown. Keep the process simple and the community informed;
- Consider merging Community Development and Economic Development for a more coordinated approach to design and development;
- Form a multi-disciplined non-profit development entity (i.e. Authority, Committee, Development Corp) responsible for the promotion and implementation of the official plan;
- Create a Business Improvement District or a similar entity to manage and organize the business community in downtown;
- Partner with the County, GRE, GTC, RGRTA, RDDC, CGR, RRCDC, RACF, etc., in implementing the official plan. Form a meaningful public/private partnership to assist in this process.

Develop a directed, focused strategic Implementation Plan that features a coordinated approach to development:

- Identify priority areas and assemble parcels for development;
- Provide incentives for retail and mixed-use development;
- Develop strategies that incorporate economic development, public safety, sustainability, and sensitivity to natural resources into the downtown planning;
- Prepare a timeline of planning activities and projects that can be implemented as part of the Center City Vision Plan. Group timeline into phased short-term, mid-term, and long-term action items.

Gibbs Street, Rochester, NY.

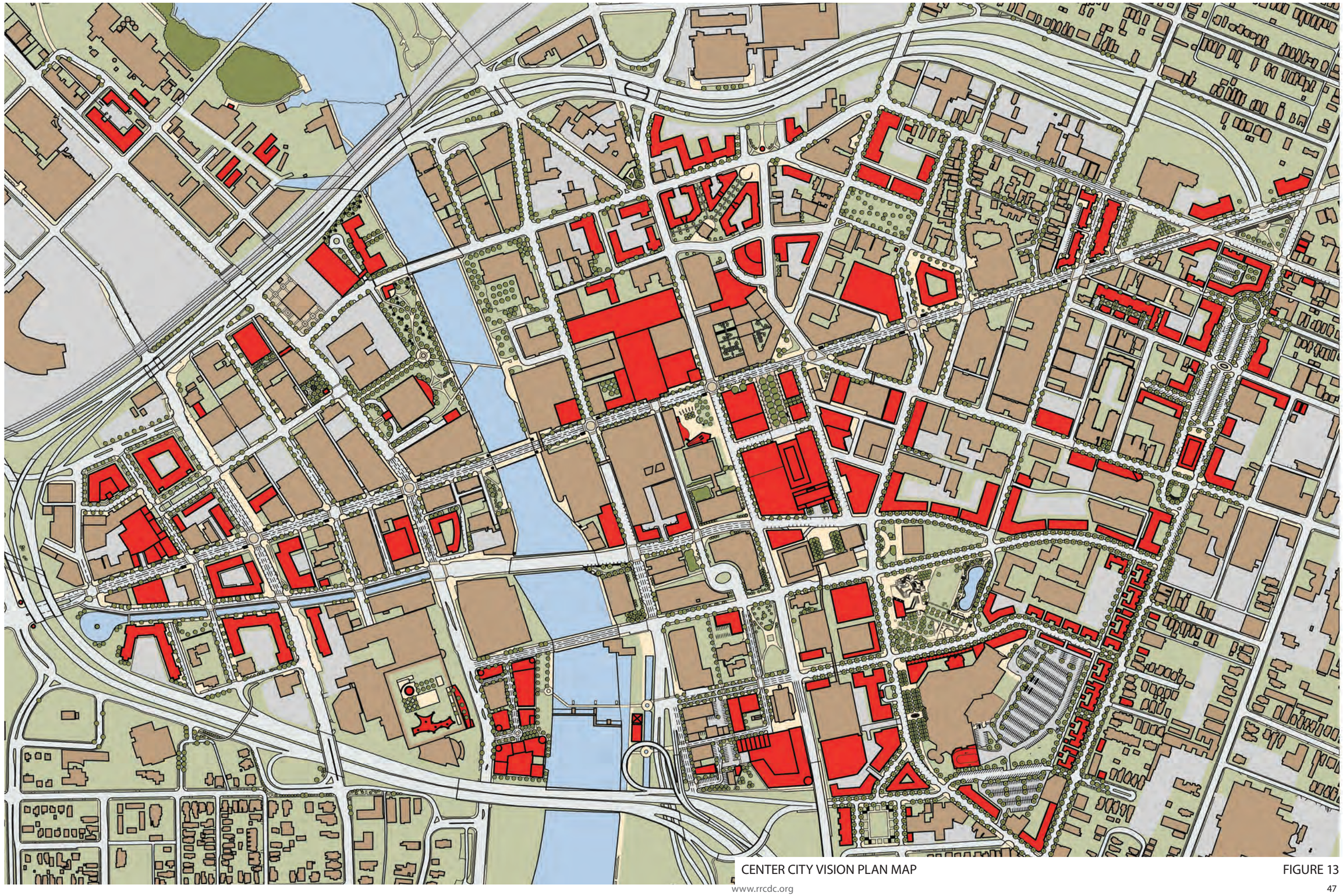
A Strategy for promoting and marketing the Center City Vision Plan will be essential in order to accomplish the desired outcomes:

- Prepare compelling marketing presentations for the purpose of soliciting support and understanding of the plan. Take the plan on the road to show to regional municipalities, citizen organizations, business leaders, bankers, developers, etc.;
- Conduct economic studies as necessary to show the viability of various components of the plan;
- Select priority businesses/attractions and aggressively promote that they do business in the downtown. Provide appropriate incentives to help in this persuasion effort. Examples of businesses to entice include an IMAX theater, a downtown food store, a Spaghetti Warehouse, corporate entities, etc.
- Place Center City Vision Plan on the walls of major meeting rooms in City Hall as a reminder of the optimism for the future of downtown. ▲

Color Legend

- Proposed Structure
- Existing building
- Sidewalk
- Crosswalks
- Parking
- Street
- Trees & Landscaping
- Grass
- Water

Rochester's Center City Master Plan.



CENTER CITY VISION PLAN MAP FIGURE 13

FOCUS AREA MAP

FIGURE 14

Charrette Focus Areas

The 2007 Downtown Charrette focused on five predetermined areas. Participants divided into 18 teams, and each team focused its efforts on one particular area during the three days of the charrette. Predetermined focus areas covered by this report are:

Area 1: CENTER CORE (*Renaissance Square Site, Midtown, Sibley's, St. Joseph's Square*)

This area contains a significant number of redevelopment parcels, some of which cover large areas of downtown (both horizontally and vertically). It is adjacent to the Hotel and Convention District, and has tremendous potential to leverage investment from the new and expanded uses planned for Renaissance Square. It also contains the two most challenging downtown redevelopment opportunities: Midtown Plaza and the Sibley's Complex. Better interconnections with the St. Paul Quarter, Washington Square, Strong Museum, Grove Place, and the Hotel and Convention District have been explored.

Perspective view of proposed Midtown Civic Square.

Area 2: THE RIVER NORTH (*High Falls*, "*Hydrogen Village*," *River north of Main Street*, *Front Street*)

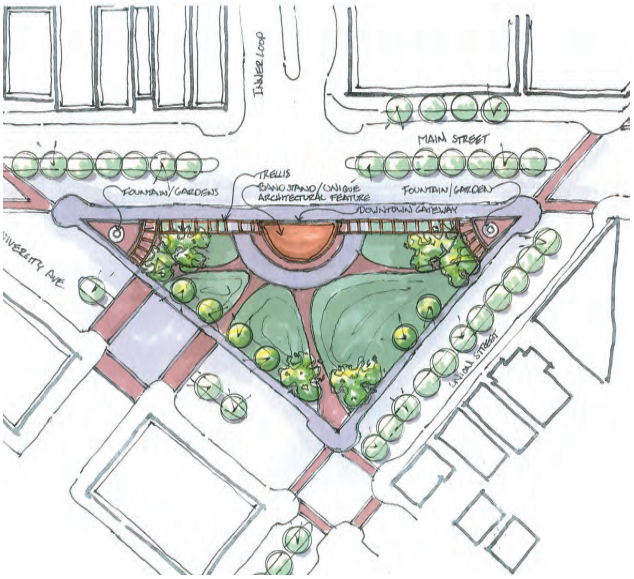
Opportunities are emerging to rethink High Falls, an area steeped in local history. Better connection with Main Street and other development along the River has been investigated. With three new residential projects under development at High Falls, the character of this charming district is changing. New concepts involve the use of the falls to power a hydrogen-based alternative energy complex, and a characterization more as an historical village than a bar-oriented entertainment district. Better connections with the Four Corners area, St. Paul Quarter, the High Falls Brewery area, the area surrounding Frontier Field, and the territory north to Lyell Avenue have been explored.

The Crossroads Village section of the River North Focus Area.

Area 3: SOUTHEAST LOOP
(*Strong Museum, southeast portion of the Inner Loop*)
With the Strong Museum's substantial investment, expansion, and recasting as the National Museum of Play, this area is now drawing more than 600,000 visitors a year, many from out of town. The potential to fill in the Inner Loop south of the University Avenue/Main Street interchange may offer opportunities to reconnect neighborhoods, create a band of new development sites, and a newer way to experience this area of the city on foot and by car. Better interconnections with the Park and Monroe Avenue neighborhoods, Washington Square, and the East End have been explored.

Area 4: MAIN STREET
(*Plymouth Avenue to Union Street*)
Main Street was redesigned in the late 1980s to have narrower streets, an open air bus terminal, and wider sidewalks. The sidewalks are nearly empty, retail business at the street level is nearly expired, and office space vacancy is the highest of any of downtown's commercial neighborhoods. With Renaissance Square radically changing the dynamic at Main and Clinton, the remainder of the stretch between the outer edge of the Four Corners area and the East End/Cultural District needs to be reimagined to encourage more vibrant street life and a richer pedestrian experience.

Area 5: THE RIVER SOUTH (*The River and South Avenue south of Main Street, Broad and Court Streets, Broad Street Aqueduct*)
The Broad Street Aqueduct has generated significant public interest relative to its reuse potential. An unusual and historic asset, it also represents a possibly massive public investment. The new City administration has agreed to give the area a closer review, and the need to blend "blue sky" ideas, market realism, and the potential for public funding has become particularly important. Opportunities to re-envision South Avenue in this area could create more walkable connections to neighborhoods south of downtown. Better connections with the Cascade District, Four Corners, Corn Hill, South Wedge, Washington Square, and the Hotel and Convention District have been explored. ▲



Proposed reconstruction of the historic Anderson Park upon the removal of the Inner Loop.

Proposed Theatre Lofts mixed-use tower on Woodbury Boulevard.

Focus Area One

Center Core

DISCUSSION

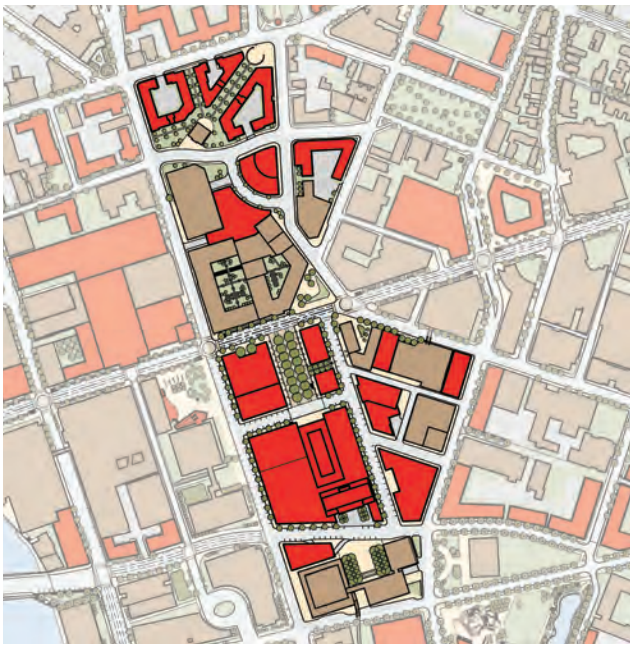
This area contains a significant number of redevelopment parcels, some of which cover large areas of downtown (both horizontally and vertically). It is adjacent to the Hotel and Convention District, and has tremendous potential to leverage investment from the new and expanded uses planned for Renaissance Square. It also contains the two most challenging downtown redevelopment opportunities: Midtown Plaza and the Sibley's Complex.

Within this focus area, the group analyzed three primary sites for opportunities to improve the public realm:

- Midtown
- Sibley's Building
- St. Joseph's Square

Midtown is a super block on a roughly eight and one half acre site bounded by Main Street, Clinton Avenue, Broad Street and Euclid Street. Midtown is an assemblage of many buildings, including the large, former McCurdy's department store which is now vacant. This retailer was among the original sponsors of the development along with the City of Rochester. A central covered pedestrian mall linked individual buildings originally constructed on separate parcels.

At the time Midtown Plaza opened in April of 1962 it was the regional center for the greater Rochester community. Amenities available within the complex included retail space, offices, hotel, grocery store, post office, underground parking and a large interior community space with fountains and a clock tower. Over the last 45 years other large retail and office complexes have been developed in closer proximity to our residential population and our outward migration to the suburbs. As a result



MIDTOWN

Observation

A residential population needs to be introduced to the Midtown site to transform the area into an urban neighborhood. A dense urban neighborhood can provide support for amenities that will also become a destination for all citizens of the greater Rochester area.

Recommendation

As a result of work completed at the 2007 Rochester Downtown Charrette, the Midtown Block has been reconceived as a reduced mall/plaza space, multiple sites for housing development, on street retail frontage and the conversion of Midtown Tower to housing. Through demolition of the northern portion of the block, the concept creates a dramatic new public space that is surrounded by development projects. The new public space serves as a festival and public gathering space linked to the existing Midtown Plaza Atrium.

Main Street entrance to Midtown Plaza, Rochester, NY.

Sibley's Building, Rochester, NY.

St. Joseph's Square at Franklin Street, Rochester, NY.

Midtown, as a destination, has continually lost its importance to people in the greater Rochester area. Without regional support the complex is no longer viable in its present configuration.

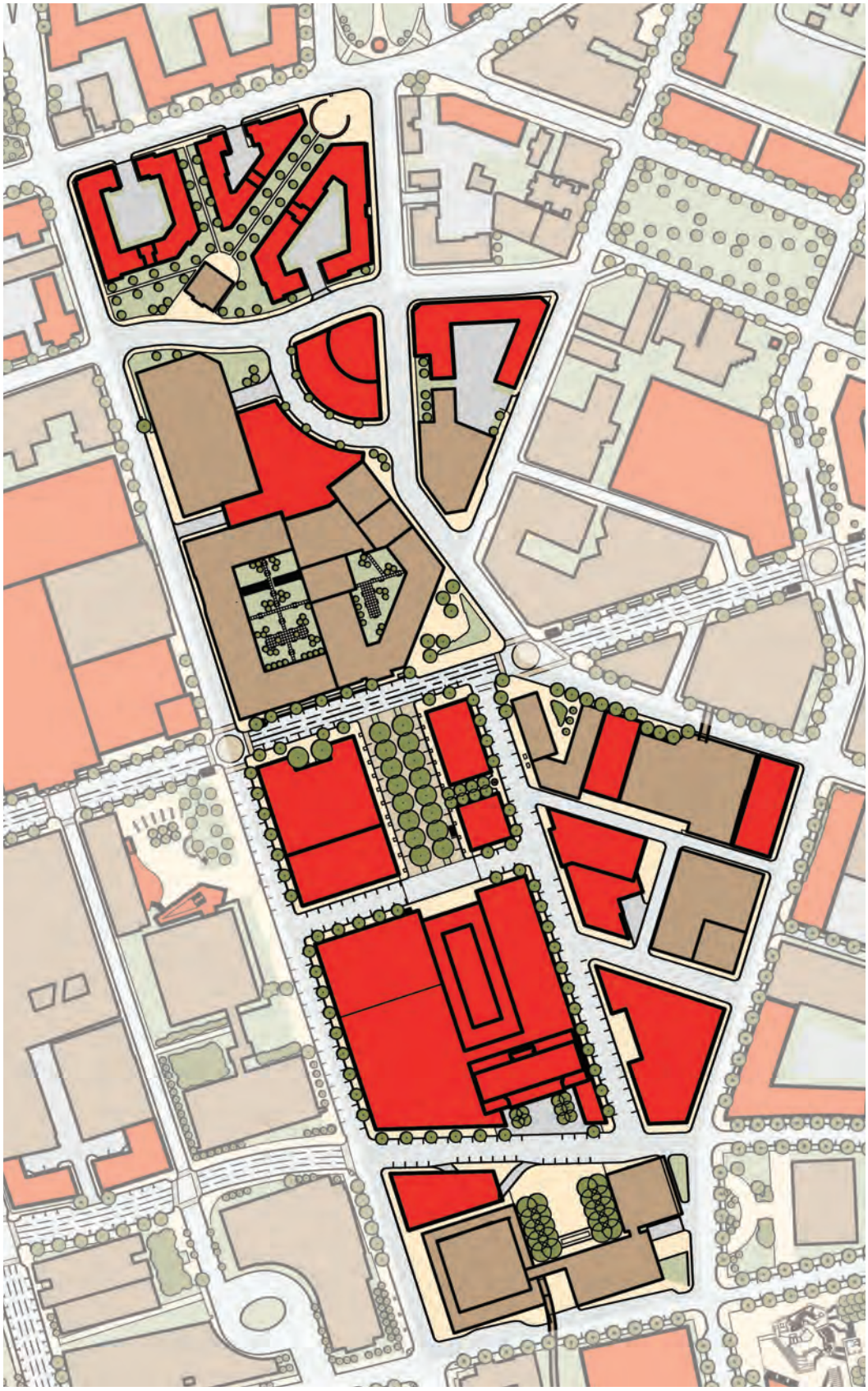
The Sibley's site in the Center Core is bounded by Pleasant Street on the north, West Main Street on the south, South Clinton Avenue on the west and Franklin Street on the east. The Sibley's Building, constructed in 1905, was originally designed as the Sibley Lindsay & Curr department store. Along with Midtown Plaza just to the south, these two parcels make up the majority of what we describe as the city's Center Core. There are an interesting stock of buildings that exist around the Sibley's Building, ranging from modern examples like Chase Tower to more historic structures like the Temple Building. Historically, this part of downtown has served as an anchor for the retail and service industry. In the 1990s, Monroe Community College renovated three floors in the Sibley's Building for its Damon City Campus. Currently, very little retail business can be found in the Sibley's Building and occupancy for office tenants was approximately 60 percent in May 2007.

The St. Joseph's Square site extends from Andrews Street on the north to Pleasant Street on the south, and from South Clinton Avenue on the west to Franklin Street on the east. The shell of the former St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is found in St. Joseph's Park, a focal point of the area. The church was built in 1846 and destroyed by fire in 1974. The park is currently surrounded by structures representing a variety of architectural styles.

CHALLENGES

The challenges for the Center Core Focus Area include:

- Needing to improve connectivity among adjacent parcels and buildings throughout the area, especially around the existing Midtown superblock;



Center Core Focus Area.

- Lack of a residential population that would transform the area into a viable, sustainable urban neighborhood;
- Need to create comfortable and accessible public spaces;
- Need to maximize infill opportunities to improve the street edge and define the urban realm to its best advantage;
- Opportunities to make the St. Joseph's church shell a focal point, creating a space for community gathering and identification.

OPPORTUNITIES

The Center Core area offers many opportunities, including:

- Maximizing mixed-uses to create a 24-hour urban neighborhood;
- Improving the public realm connections to adjacent sites and buildings through the creation of new streets and smaller blocks;
- Creating a new civic space to encourage mixed-use development, incorporating housing and retail, on the Midtown site;
- Reintegrating, rescaling and reconnecting Midtown to the fabric of downtown;
- Subdividing the Midtown "super-block";
- Creating new exterior public space with physical and visual connections to the Midtown Plaza Atrium;
- Restoring the Midtown Plaza Atrium while eliminating interior public "corridors";
- Creating viable development sites for new mixed-uses;
- Creating new views from Rochester's public realm to city landmarks;
- Converting Midtown Tower to housing;
- Developing adjacent sites to support Midtown's reconnection to the city;
- Providing enhancements to the public realm on the Midtown site.

Midtown Plaza is highlighted in the middle right portion of this aerial view of the downtown. Note its footprint in nearly twice the size of Frontier Field in the upper left quadrant of the picture.

SITES FOR INTERVENTION

Midtown

At the time Midtown Plaza opened in April of 1962 it was a regional commercial and retail center for the greater Rochester community. Amenities available within the complex included retail establishments, offices, a hotel, a grocery store, post office, underground parking and a large interior community space with fountains and a clock tower.

Over the last 45 years other large retail and office complexes have been developed in outlying areas at the perimeter of the city and beyond as the residential population moved outward to the suburbs. As a result, Midtown has continually lost its importance as a destination for shopping in the greater Rochester area. Without regional support the complex is no longer viable in its present configuration.

Additionally, the super block is not permeable and does not connect successfully to adjacent parcels, substantially hindering redevelopment of these sites or adaptive reuse of adjacent buildings. All of the ideas explored by 2007 Downtown Charrette teams involved ways to break down the super block and redevelop public space on the site to enhance Rochester's public realm.

Recommendations

The proposed treatment retains as much of the 1962 Midtown Plaza structure as possible, and respects the critical need to protect the current City of Rochester-owned underground parking garage as well as the truck tunnel, including all current access points.

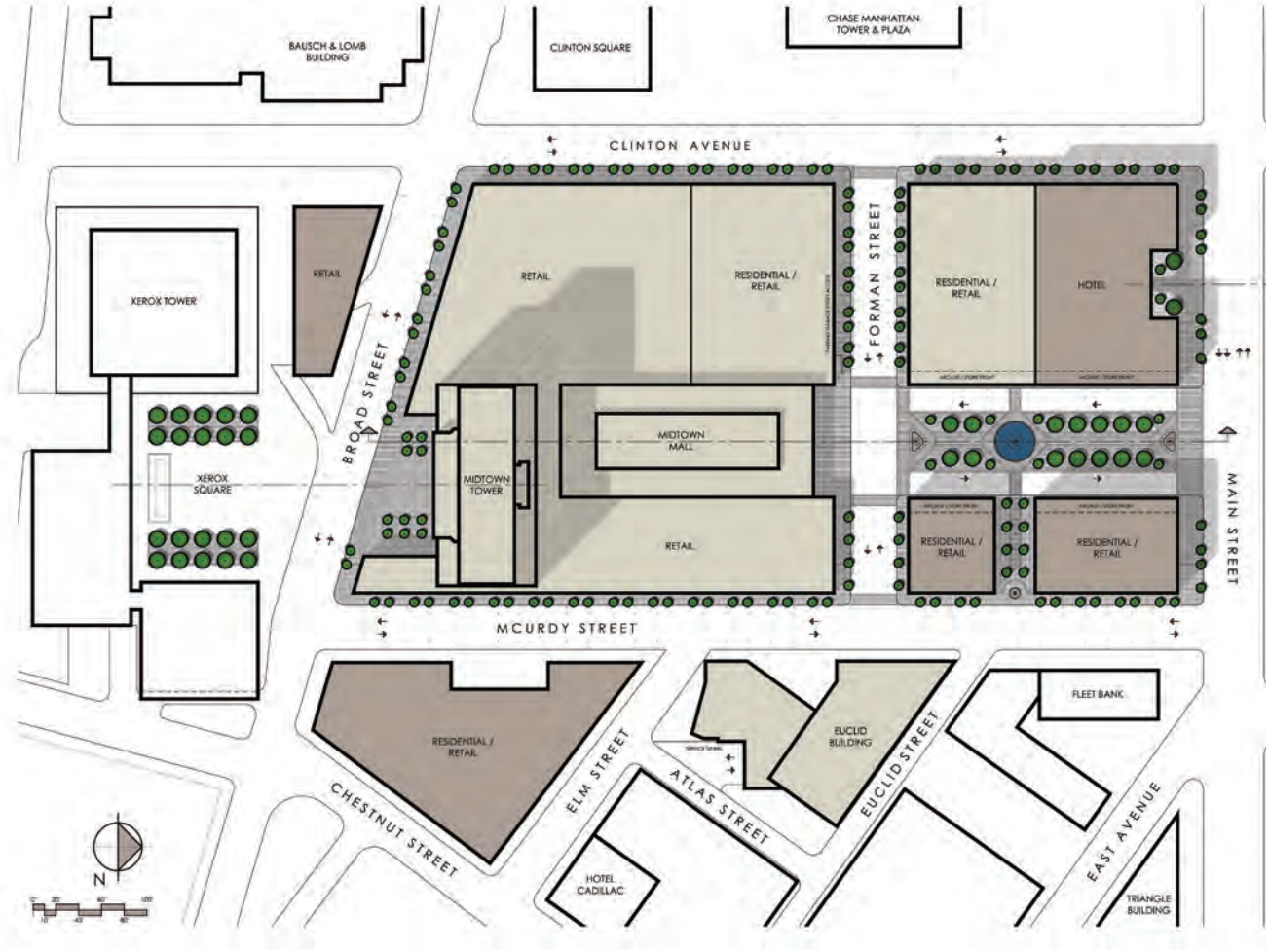
The team's recommendation selectively demolishes a number of structures currently located on the block to create a new outdoor public space, new streets with on-street parking, smaller city blocks, and development sites for new mixed-use buildings. The buildings proposed for demolition in this

In its heyday, Midtown Plaza thronged with shoppers and visitors around its "Clock of the Nations."

Midtown Plaza today presents a blank façade and broken sign.

scheme include:

- Citizens Bank Building at 233 East Main Street
- 249 East Main Street
- 255 East Main Street
- The northern portion of the mall entrance structure
- McCurdy's Building
- Seneca Building, 18 South Clinton Avenue
- B. Forman Building, 32 South Clinton Avenue
- Two-story, former grocery store at the corner of South Clinton Avenue and Broad Street
- Former bus station portion of the property including structures, driveways and bus loading areas



Site plan of Midtown proposal.

Midtown Tower would be retained, remediated, and converted to housing. Approximately 200,000 square feet of retail space in the plaza would be retained, and an additional 150,000 square feet of retail space could be added on the first two floors of the new structures proposed for the remainder of the site.

This proposal successfully achieves the following goals:

1. Reintegrate, rescale and reconnect Midtown to the fabric of downtown

   The proposed solution reconnects Midtown to Rochester's downtown and erases the distinction between what is and what is not "Midtown." It creates a true center that is an integral part of both Midtown and Rochester's public realm.

2. Subdivide the Midtown "super-block"

   This very large city block is subdivided into a series of smaller blocks by the creation of new streets that bisect the current geography—north/south and east/west—to promote pedestrian connections. Small blocks like these have been found to be a very strong component in successful urban environments. The new streets have been located to retain the majority of the original Midtown Plaza mall space. A new Forman Street is located just

north of both the existing Midtown Plaza Atrium and the underground parking garage; the new McCurdy Street is located to allow for access to both the Euclid Building and the Midtown truck tunnel entrance.

3. Create new exterior public space with physical and visual connections to the Midtown Plaza Atrium

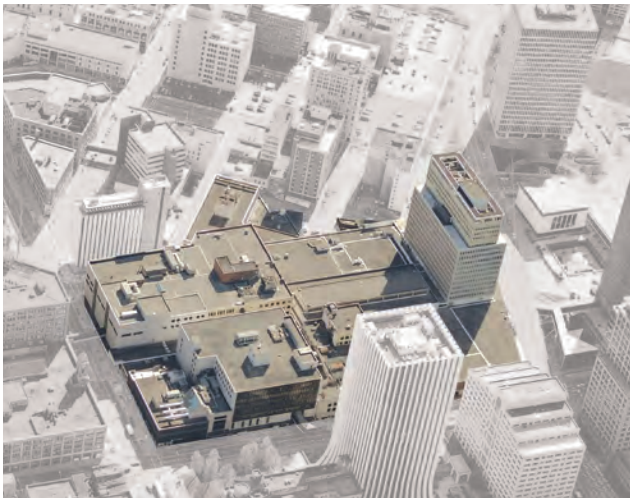
   Demolishing the existing McCurdy's Building allows the existing two-story Midtown Plaza Atrium space to front directly on a new street and public space extending to Main Street. One-way streets on either side with on-street parking flank this public space, conceived as a great lawn or cobbled square. This public space can also be significantly expanded in milder weather with the Midtown Plaza Atrium opening onto the outdoor public space. The new north glass wall of the Midtown Plaza Atrium has the potential for a 30-foot high opening onto the public space. This would create a significant and highly flexible new public performance and festival space. The new street system could be shut down to accommodate large public concerts, events, street vendor locations, and casual seating areas. This direct connection between indoor and outdoor public spaces would promote the successful use of both the plaza/atrium and the plaza/park.

4. Restore the Midtown Plaza Atrium while eliminating interior public corridors

   The atrium space in Midtown Plaza is currently not connected visually or experientially to Rochester's public realm. For this existing space to function properly it must invite people both in and out. A strong line of sight connection from this space to Main Street is essential. All connections must be via streets, sidewalks and public squares, not interior corridors.

5. Create viable development sites for new mixed-uses

   New development sites at critical corners of the former Midtown super-block are appropriately scaled in this proposal for new mixed-use and residential development. By breaking down the larger property into more manageable sites, this layout would allow several developers to share the risks in redevelopment on this block. It is anticipated that the development sites located adjacent to the proposed new outdoor public space will



Existing conditions at Midtown Site.

Midtown proposal massing study in context of surrounding development.

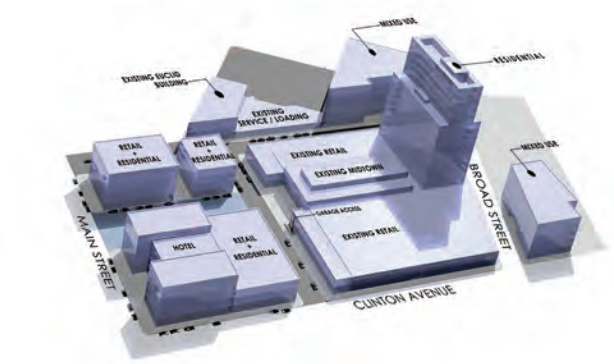
have added market value for developers, and would create a synergy with existing residential units at the Temple Building and increased developer interest in a residential conversion of Sibley's Tower.

6. Create new views from Rochester's public realm to city landmarks

   The proposed new street locations create visual axes and vistas that are terminated by significant existing buildings. The selected street locations add value to both the newly expanded public realm and existing buildings. The new Forman Street is aligned with the Chase Tower. The new McCurdy Street is aligned with the Liberty Pole. The public space proposed between Main Street and the Midtown Plaza Atrium is visually enclosed by the Sibley's Tower to the north and Midtown Tower to the south.

7. Convert the existing Midtown Tower to housing

   The proposal highlights and celebrates the Midtown Tower structure and proposes converting Midtown Tower to 150–200 new residential units. Access to the tower is proposed on a newly created entrance court that will be part of a reshaped and redesigned Xerox Square (a former below grade ice skating rink area) on a narrowed Broad Street. Apartments in the base tower would be flats, and those at the top of the tower would be duplexes accessed off a single central corridor as shown in the site/building section below.



Midtown proposal massing study.

8. Develop adjacent sites to support Midtown's reconnection to the city

   Sites adjacent to Midtown at (1) the northwest corner of Chestnut and Broad Streets, (2) the southeast corner of South Clinton Avenue and Broad Street, and (3) the southwest corner of Euclid and East Main Streets are proposed for the development of housing and mixed-use buildings. The existing underground Midtown parking garage, easily accessible at each of these locations, can serve

Site/building section of the Midtown proposal.

these development sites.

9. Provide enhancements to the public realm on the Midtown site

   Additional access points to the underground parking garage are proposed from the public sidewalks at the outdoor public gathering space between Midtown and Main Street. These points of access would be similar to subway stops located on the sidewalks of New York City. Open arcades are envisioned at the ground floor of the new mixed-use buildings on the public space connecting Main Street and Midtown.

Six months after the 2007 Downtown Charrette, a local corporation, Paetec, announced a decision to move its corporate headquarters downtown to the Midtown site. We believe that the recommendations outlined in this report lend themselves to adaptation to the Paetec plans. Paetec's headquarters tower would most likely occupy approximately one acre of the Midtown roughly eight and one half acre site.

The Paetec tower could be appropriately situated in more than one location, depending upon how the existing buildings are reused or demolished. Several possibilities remain with regard to the possible reuse of Midtown Tower:

- Strip the building to its steel frame and, depending on its condition, use the frame to construct the new Paetec tower, adding design components to the Midtown shell to give it Paetec's architectural signature;
- Convert the Midtown Tower to housing as proposed above;
- Demolish Midtown Tower and build the Paetec tower on its footprint;

Perspective of proposed Midtown Civic Square from Main Street. Drawing by Craig Jensen.

- Locate the new Paetec tower on the corner of Main Street and Clinton Avenue, leaving the Midtown Tower site available for other uses.

From a sustainability standpoint, it would be wise to explore all of the possibilities at hand.

The Sibley's Building

The Sibley's Building was explored as two separate pieces, a 12-story tower and a 5-story block. One of the difficulties in developing the Sibley's Building is its immense floor plate. While the perimeter of the building is highly accessible, as it was in its heyday, the interior spaces present challenges. For retail to be successful, interior stores need to be accessible from the street, and the floor plan now is not conducive to this happening. Parking is also an issue and additional space needs to be provided to support new retail and office uses.

Additionally, through some selective demolition, there is an excellent opportunity to develop a mixed-use facility that incorporates office, retail and residential elements. The use of green roofs and light courts, or partial demolition to create courtyards, would create interior public areas around which office, retail and residential elements could be located. Within the surrounding area, there also exist additional infill building opportunities that would strengthen the street edge and better define the urban realm.

Recommendations

Each of the following developments adds to a scale that better relates to the Sibley's Building.

- Develop retail spaces along the entire ground floor of the building. Coupled with putting street parking back onto Main Street, this will bring activity back to the street, which is vital to any city center;
- Carve out the core of the 5-story building, allowing better utilization of the floor plate for office and retail uses, as well as providing additional natural lighting;
- Create an outdoor courtyard in the carved out core of the 5-story building, providing a naturally lighted and comfortable civic space that is accessible to everyone;
- Carve out part of the core of the tower as well, allowing the creation of a light well around which to develop apartments;
- Develop an addition to the existing parking garage to address parking, also creating an

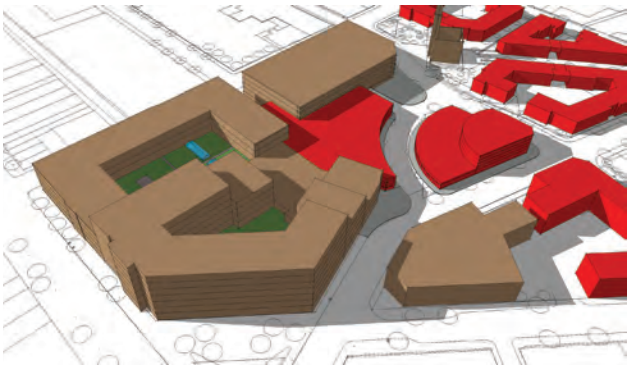
SIBLEY'S BUILDING

Observation

The Sibley's block is an important key to the revitalization of downtown. Returning retail to the ground floor of the Sibley's Building, and returning parking to Main Street are important steps toward reinvigorating the city center.

Recommendation

There is huge potential for the development of retail, office and residential uses within this building. Along with Sibley's, there are adjacent properties prime for infill construction that will better define the public realm. Through selective demolition, the Sibley's Building could become a very successful multi-use building.



Massing model of proposed development at the Sibley's Building.

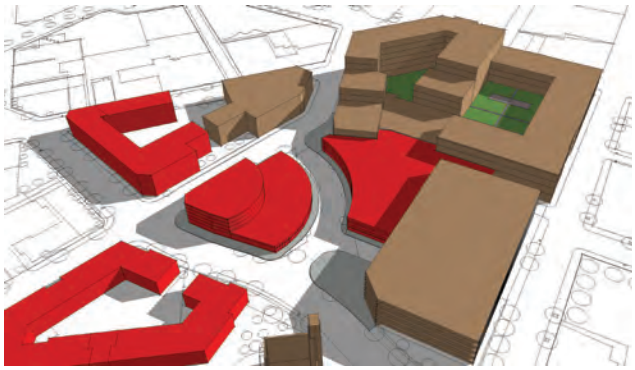
interesting new streetscape;
- Utilize the new building site created by the new street that results from additional parking, defining an important urban corner.

St. Joseph's Square

The existing St. Joseph's Square is an interesting piece of architecture that is lost among a diverse and unsuccessful group of buildings. With its proximity to the entertainment district to the west on St. Paul Street and to the Sibley's and Midtown blocks to the south, this area of the city could be a prime location for townhouse development.

Recommendations

- Create a healthy mix of rental and owner occupied townhouses to complement the new apartments in the Sibley's Building;
- Make the shell of the old St. Joseph's church an exciting focal point of this new development.
- Build the development to front the street wherever possible, creating a cohesive and understood street edge;
- Include individual rear-entrance garages for each of the tenants on the ground floor of their units and their living spaces on the subsequent floors above;
- Construct a new pedestrian walk that extends through the development and connects an existing park to the north back down to the church;
- Render the space along the pedestrian walk public, which is important in making these townhomes truly urban;
- Program the church itself as a coffee shop or restaurant. Ideally, this shell can become a gathering place for people who live in the vicinity, not just those in the townhouses;
- Within the block of the new townhomes, develop secure underground or surface parking for residents;
- Make street parking available all around the development.



Massing model of proposed office building and parking garage.

Massing model of proposed townhouses at St. Joseph's Square.

St. Joseph's Square

Observation

The St. Joseph's Square neighborhood could be an excellent location for owner-occupied housing.

Recommendation

Developing the new housing blocks using the old church shell as a focal point could create a space for community gathering and identification.

Perspective of proposed townhouse development at St. Joseph's Square looking northeast from Pleasant and North Clinton Streets. Drawing by Al Pardi.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations proposed for the City Center Focus Area retains as much of the 1962 Midtown Plaza structure as possible, respecting the critical need to protect the current City of Rochester -owned underground parking garage as well as the truck tunnel and all of its current access points. The plan would include demolishing some selected structures at Midtown to create new outside public space, new streets with on-street parking, smaller city blocks, and development sites for new mixed-use buildings. It also gives thoughtful consideration to the possibilities and adaptations that the recent addition of plans for the new Paetec headquarters presents. Reducing the footprint of the Sibley's Building through partial demolition offers opportunity to develop a mixed-use facility that incorporates office, retail and residential elements. Lastly, a townhouse development organized around the existing church shell at St. Joseph's Square would create an excellent complement to new rental units proposed at the Sibley's Building. This project would act as a catalyst for the development of a new, dense residential neighborhood on other adjacent sites including the former Greyhound Bus terminal. ▲

Perspective of proposed townhouse development at St. Joseph's Square looking southwest from Andrews and Franklin Streets. Drawing by Eddie Davis.

Focus Area Two

River North

DISCUSSION

The River North Focus Area is bounded by Main Street to the south, Genesee River to the east, Fitzhugh Street and a Kodak parking lot to the west, and the Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E) Beebe Station to the north.

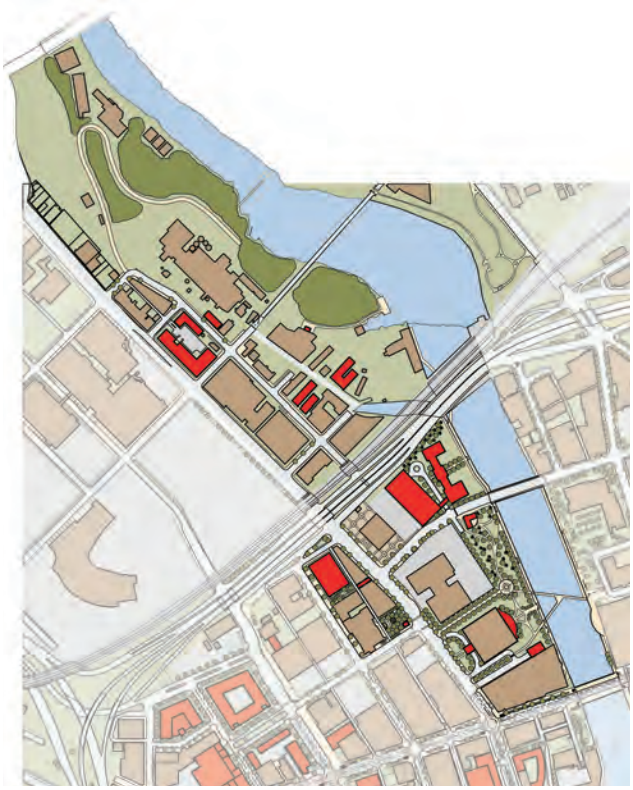
Within this focus area, there were five primary sites analyzed for opportunities to improve the public realm. Those sites are as follows:

- City Hall and an adjacent surface parking area on Church Street;
- The vacant RG&E waterfront site located on the Genesee River and bounded by Front and Andrews Streets;
- Crossroads Plaza;
- The former IBM building located at State and Andrews Streets;
- The High Falls area, including the RG&E Beebe Station.

City Hall, the RG&E site, Crossroads Plaza and the former IBM site are all south of the Inner Loop. This portion of the focus area is characterized by buildings constructed in varying eras, underutilized structures, vacant land and a riverfront with development potential.

The High Falls area, located to the north of the Inner Loop, includes a magnificent 96-foot high waterfall with viewing options that surpass most waterfalls of comparable size. A narrow rock gorge is encircled with historic buildings on the west side, a wonderful pedestrian bridge crossing the gorge and the historic High Falls Brewery (formerly Genesee Brewery), a local establishment with international recognition.

The Brown's Race area consists of restored buildings and a millrace depicting how hydropower



was used to drive early Rochester industries. The area includes the Center at High Falls, which was developed by the City of Rochester and features two demonstration galleries, a historic display of local industries, a store and full restroom facilities. The High Falls area also includes a six-story parking garage located within two blocks of the falls. A

Observation

The High Falls Village Area has tremendous potential for growth given its unique 96-foot waterfalls, extensive history and prior City investment.

Recommendation

Improvements (mostly private sector) which build on the prior City of Rochester investments in infrastructure will help the area realize its full potential.

working hydroelectric plant draws water from the local millrace and generates electricity for a portion of the community needs.

Outside of the immediate Brown's Race location there exists a mixture of commercial, office and entertainment venues. Kodak Headquarters, along with Frontier Field, are also adjacent to the area. The City of Rochester has offered development incentives and funding here for many years. The City's interest in this locality has helped to make it an attractive destination. It has also produced a tremendous foundation for development in the surrounding areas.

CHALLENGES

The challenges for the River North Focus Area include:

- Creating connections to foster engagement of the dynamic riverfront area from surrounding streets and neighborhoods;
- Maximizing development potential of vacant or underutilized land within the study area;
- Making City Hall a visible focal point from State Street, a main thoroughfare with other civic buildings;
- Connecting the area south of the Inner Loop to High Falls;
- Improving existing streetscapes;
- Creating a destination point and neighborhood atmosphere for the High Falls area.

SITES FOR INTERVENTION

City Hall

Rochester's City Hall is located in the former Federal Building, designed in the Romanesque style by renowned architect Harvey Ellis. It was completed in the late 1880s and is no longer visible to most of the surrounding area. Currently, a building on the corner of Church and State Streets obscures the view of the east façade. The imprudent location of

The High Falls of the Genesee River, Rochester, NY.

The Pont De Rennes Bridge over the Genesee River, Rochester, NY.

an existing surface parking lot between State Street and the historic building further diminishes the prospect.

Mixed-use Building on Front Street and Andrews Street

RG&E currently owns a vacant parcel on Front Street. The parcel is classified as an environmentally challenged or brownfield site, which adds the need for environmental cleanup to any development of the parcel.

Crossroads Plaza

Crossroads Plaza is currently an underdeveloped space that fails to capitalize on its location along

the riverfront. The design of the park is outdated with poor lighting, seating areas that create security issues, hardscape features that have little meaning to the overall space and overgrown, poorly maintained plantings. There is a lack of pedestrian connection to the river north of the Andrews Street Bridge. Moreover, the pedestrian connection from the park to Main Street is weak.

Former IBM Building

The former IBM building located at the corner of State and Andrews Streets lacks pedestrian connections to both streets. The building was constructed on a raised platform with parking below, creating a moat-like feeling. Pedestrian connections from State Street south of the Inner Loop to the High Falls area are inhibited by the lack of interaction between the building and streetscape.

State Street Pedestrian Experience

The Inner Loop underpass at State Street prevents a pleasant pedestrian connection from State Street south of the Inner Loop to High Falls. While additional lighting and gateway features have been introduced at the underpass, the area remains uninviting. Moreover, State Street north of the Inner Loop lacks streetscape amenities that would encourage pedestrian circulation.

Existing conditions found at River North Focus Area.

High Falls Village

Beebe Station:

Owned by RG&E, a local utility and a major land owner in the region, the plant is a former coal fired electric generating facility with hazardous waste producing functions. Its former use as a coal gasification plant along with other issues has created

Existing conditions at City Hall surface parking lot, Rochester, NY.

Existing building at City Hall surface parking lot, Rochester, NY.

the need for environmental cleanup. The owner is unclear about the completion date of the environmental cleanup. A large portion of the land on the lower level is also owned by the utility and there are numerous industrial type buildings.

Steep Terrain:

With its dramatic character, the terrain along the Genesee River at High Falls is both an asset and a challenge. Access to the lower gorge has been impossible without approach from the north after traveling down other roadways. The steep cliffs require fencing and do not allow a perimeter walkway on the west side.

Family Interest Venues:

Given its unusual quality, more could be done to develop the area as a destination for family activities. There have not been enough activities to draw families to the area on a frequent visit basis.

Safety:

Many would-be visitors have a negative perception about safety on the bridge and possibly in adjacent areas. This perception results in the fact that It does not routinely draw crowds. A special note of con-

View of Genesee Crossroads Park looking south from Andrews Street, Rochester, NY.

Existing conditions of RG&E site at Andrews Street, Rochester, NY.

Promenade in Genesee Crossroads Park with First Federal Plaza in the background, Rochester, NY.

Andrews Street RG&E site looking north along Genesee River, Rochester, NY.

cern is related to the bridge because it has a long span without emergency phones.

Connections along River:

The CSX rail lines and the Inner Loop currently impede the connection to the south along the Genesee River.

Concerns about Overdevelopment of Lower Plateau Area:

Some people have suggested that human visitation to the lower plateau should be minimized. This will need to be balanced against the goals of preserving historic buildings and creating some access to view the falls.

Impeded View of Falls:

The view of the High Falls from the Gorsline Plaza, located on a dramatic site immediately adjacent to the top to the waterfall, is impeded by a large concrete wall that was installed years ago to channel flood waters. Unfortunately, the crest of the Falls can not be seen from this location.

Lack of Identity and Signage:

Some people believe that visitors may miss High

State Street passing under the railroad and Inner Loop, Rochester, NY.

Floodwall impeding the view of High Falls from Gorsline Plaza, Rochester, NY.

State Street looking northwest toward Kodak Headquarters, Rochester, NY.

Beebe Station looking north along the Genesee River, Rochester, NY.

Falls entirely unless they have prior knowledge of the location and the intention of visiting already. Modifications to road texture and signage may help draw visitors previously unaware of this valuable natural asset into the neighborhood.

Lack of Grocery and other services:

There are currently one housing and two housing/office developments being promoted in the High Falls vicinity. The area needs service related stores to improve the sustainability and livability of those developments. Retail outlets enhancing the area would include grocery or market and other services.

OPPORTUNITIES

The River North Focus Area offers many opportunities including:

- Build on prior City investment, fully using and developing existing businesses and attractions, including the Visitor Center and festival site already created with public funding;
- Identify projects that are implementable and reasonable;
- Solicit private sector investment/sponsorship of activities;
- Enhance public realm spaces and streetscapes;
- Improve circulation and access;
- Create activities that will draw in families on a repeated basis;
- Highlight the history of waterpower, coal and hydroelectric energy in the area;
- Promote Goal Four of the October, 2006 Green Print Rochester—Turning Green Into Growth: Convert High Falls into a Hydrogen Production Facility;
- Create a central theme that will promote a catalyst for development;
- Nurture timely environmental cleanup of Beebe station and adjacent areas;
- Build on the existing environmental resource, celebrating the nature within the lower gorge and respecting the natural character of the area;
- Improve access to the waterfront;
- Create spaces for public art.

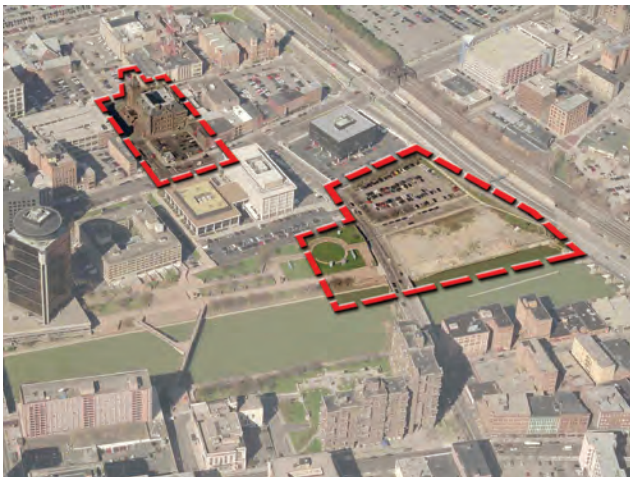
RG&E's Beebe Station, Rochester, NY.

High Falls at Gorsline Plaza, Rochester, NY.

SOLUTIONS

City Hall

It is recommended that a pocket park be constructed to replace the existing surface parking lot at the corner of Church and State Streets contiguous to City Hall. The park would create a public realm space that accomplishes the following:



The existing conditions from an aerial view of the city hall parking area and the RG&E site.

Site for parking garage at City Hall, Rochester, NY.

Proposed improvements for the River North Focus Area including High Falls Village and Crossroads Village.

- Maximizes the view of the City Hall from State Street;
- Provides a stronger pedestrian connection from City Hall to State Street where the Federal Courthouse is located as well as to the Genesee riverfront;
- Provides an outdoor gathering space for civic events.

Design elements of the new "City Hall Park" include:

- Outdoor stage and podium for mayoral address and entertainment events;
- Fenced park boundary to create a sense of place. Columns for fencing should complement design features of existing building;
- Special paving materials with City logo as a feature;
- Outdoor seating areas;
- Mural on commercial building that borders the site to the north to soften the impact of the existing blank façade;
- Renovation of existing building at the corner of Church and State Streets to provide a building façade more in keeping with surrounding structures. This building could be used as a corner eatery with outside café tables;
- Construction of a 4-story parking garage within the existing designated City Hall staff parking site, enhancing parking and replacing spaces lost in creation of pocket park area.

City Hall Park site plan.

RG&E Site on Front Street and Andrews Street

It is proposed that the current RG&E property be reclaimed for loft housing and commercial/specialty retail at street level or office space on the 2nd floor level. The architectural character should complement old Rochesterville (located across the river) while providing the amenities possible with new construction. The building configuration provides for a dramatic view to the river from a securable courtyard facing Front Street.

The building should be fully "green," incorporating principles of sustainable site design, energy efficiency, reduced water usage, healthy building construction and design innovations. The use of vegetated or "green" roofs incorporated into the design creates an attractive and functional series of outdoor spaces for tenants and residents.

Crossroads Plaza

Construction of a new promenade is proposed for the river's edge. The promenade would run continuously along each side of the river wall. The elevation of this walkway would be set 3 feet above the mean river level, allowing pedestrians close engagement with the river flow. The grade differential between the promenade and the adjacent landside walkways would vary and be resolved through the design of numerous access points connecting these two important pedestrian ways.

Historic view of Four Corners looking north.

To accomplish this grade change, the size and height of the existing garage along the river would need to be reduced. While 60 percent of the parking capacity would be retained, the configuration of the underground parking structure would be modified. The two uppermost parking levels would be removed while another lower level would be added. This would allow for a virtually level access from State Street to the riverfront. Secondly, the addition of a new parking garage adjacent to the proposed mixed-use building at Andrews Street would serve both the new building and the reduced size of the existing garage. The mixed-use building would connect to the new adjacent parking structure via an enclosed bridge. Hence the parking structure would replace the parking spaces lost at the Crossroads Garage site and would include dedicated parking for the mixed-use housing development.

Redesign of the plaza would also include the provision of a new restaurant. The restaurant would introduce a year round use that would encourage visitors to the plaza in hours other than the current 9 AM–5 PM period.

A landscaped pedestrian corridor between the Crossroads Hotel and the Federal Courthouse would enhance the connection of the plaza to State Street. Specialty pavers within the State Street crosswalk area would further enhance the pedestrian connection from the river to City Hall and points west.

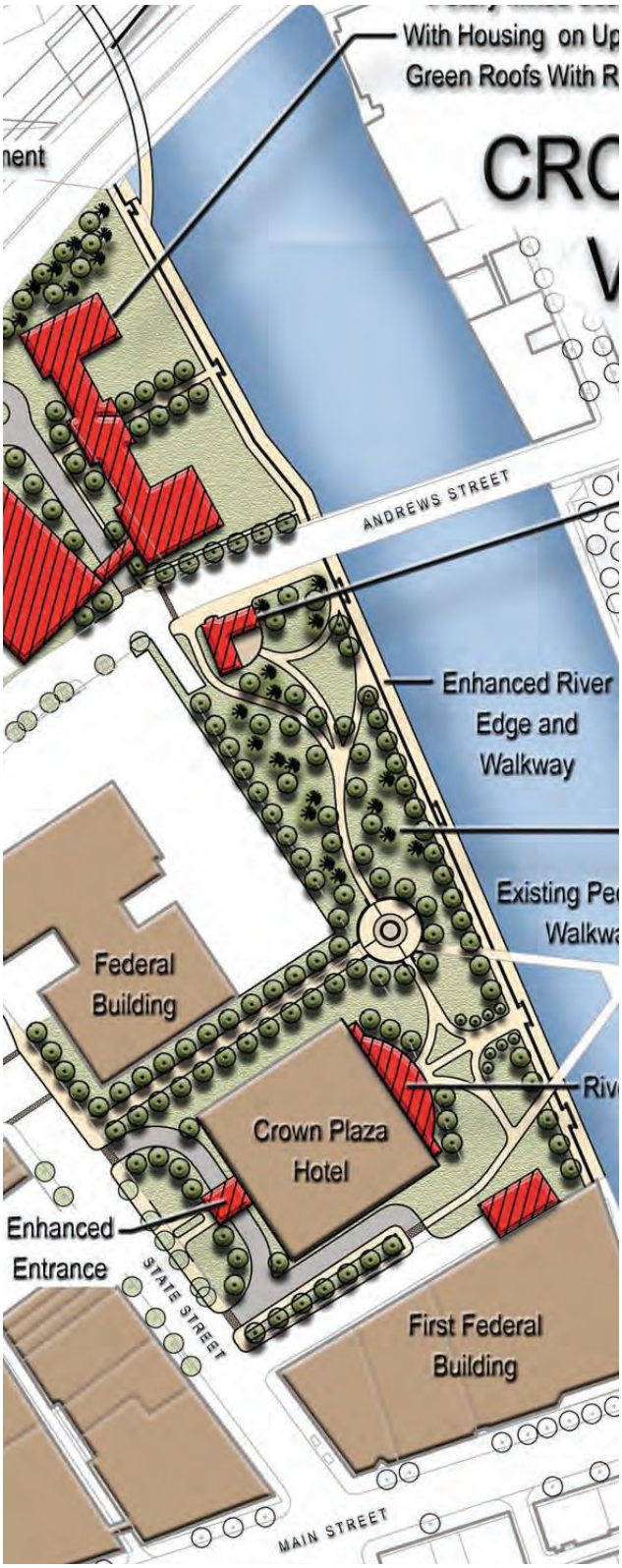
Former IBM Building

The construction of an at-grade, street level plaza added around the existing building on the south, west and north sides would enhance the public realm. The street level plaza would cover parking on the lower level which would continue as it currently exists. This plaza would also allow for public art display while engaging the building with the street.

State Street Pedestrian Experience

It is recommended that the existing billboards within the underpass be removed. Public art works would be introduced to the bridge structure. It is suggested that pictures similar to those at Frontier Field be placed on the walls of the bridge structure. Moreover, additional decorative neon tube lighting,

Proposed green space and mixed-use development at the Andrews Street RG&E site.



Crossroads Plaza site plan.

similar to lighting used in Chicago's O'Hare airport terminal, would be installed.

To improve the pedestrian experience of State Street north of the Inner Loop, it is suggested that streetscape amenities including specialty paving treatments, plantings, and lighting be provided. It is also recommended that fencing, providing attractive screening, be constructed along the boundaries of the Kodak parking lot. This fencing could be similar to the gateway structures at Frontier Field.

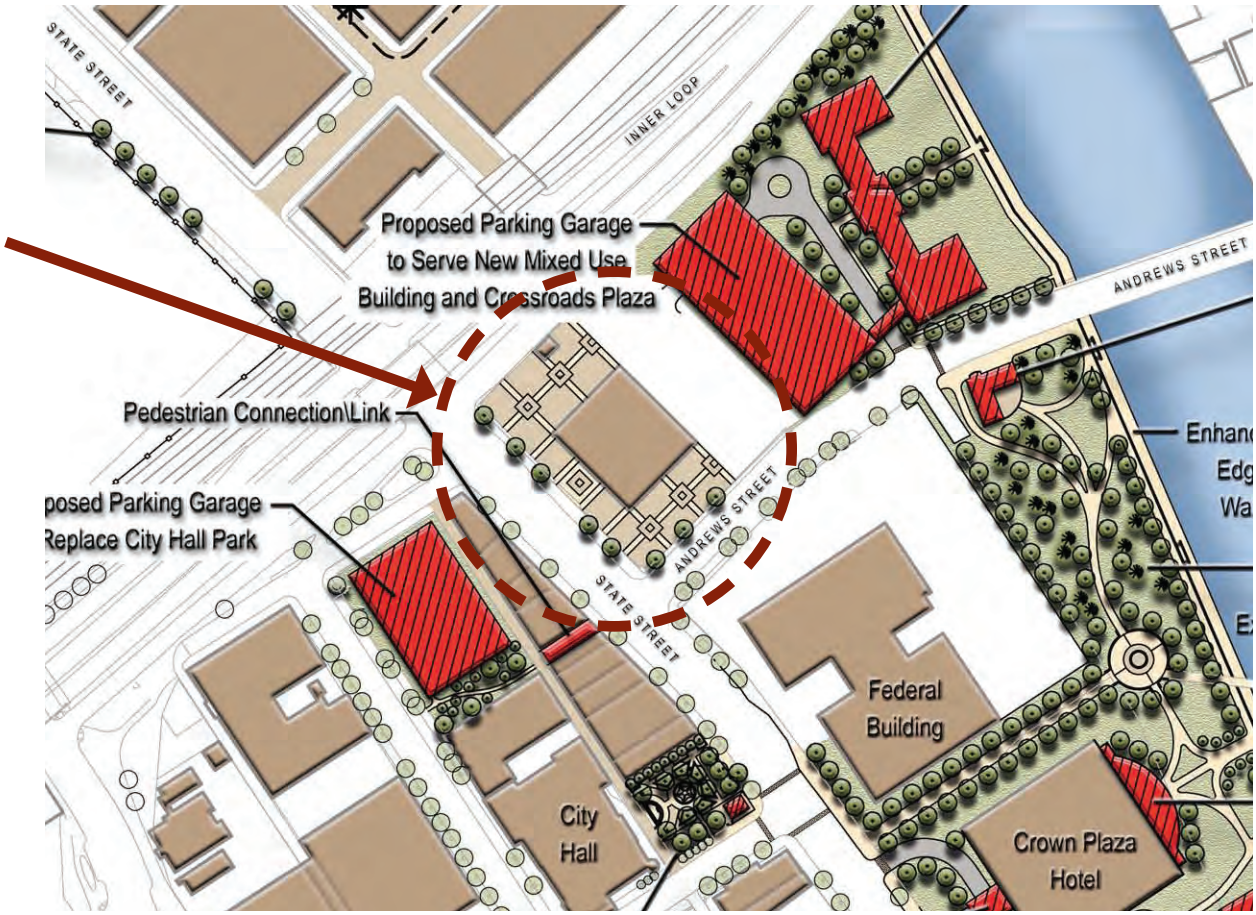
High Falls Village Short Range

The Brown's Race area and Beebe Station site should be referred to as the High Falls Village to provide a sense of community which will help to promote additional housing and office projects.

Circulation:

- Establishment of a privately funded tram conveyance is recommended to connect the parking garage to the Brown's Race area as well as across the Pont de Rennes Bridge to the brewery and then to a turnaround point at the High Falls Terrace Park. The tram stops would include viewing points on both sides of the falls, a potential beer garden at High Falls Brewery, as well as the Center at High Falls. Alternative

Example of proposed tram.



IBM site plan.

sources of fuel for the tram should be explored;

- Establish stops for a themed rubber tired trolley to connect the High Falls area with the proposed Main Street trolley;
- Create a road texture and streetscape on additional streets in High Falls Village to match the streetscape already created along Brown's Race;
- Create a connection under the CSX railroad and Inner loop along the river. Options include a cantilevered walkway along the river wall extending under the second bay of the bridges.

Use of Existing Facilities/Buildings:

- Installation of an elevator at the Center at High Falls to access lower plateau is suggested. Reputedly, the structural support for an elevator was already placed during the prior City renovation and can be used as a foundation;
- Create a display (with private assistance) of the first phase of an energy history museum at the upstairs gallery at the Center at High Falls. Potential funding sources could include RG&E (for the coal/hydro history) and General Motors (for a hydrogen fuel display);
- Modify the existing laser show to include options allowing children to draw designs that would be displayed briefly later that night. The interactive PC's could be located at the Center at High Falls. This would create a family-friendly activity and generate interest for all age levels;
- Create a beer garden/visitor center at the High Falls Brewery adjacent to the tram stop;

- Restore access to the falls viewing platform in the gorge once designated as Beebe Park. This location is dramatic and is reminiscent of viewing options at Niagara Falls;
- Study whether the concrete wall can be lowered slightly at the fall's crest;
- Improve access to the waterwheel located next to Triphammer's Grill.

Modifications to Buildings and Streetscapes:

- Extend the streetscape from Brown's Race out into adjacent blocks. Modifications should provide and enhance identity and character to the area;
- Infill with mixed-use/residential buildings that are in the same architectural style as the rest of the area.

Safety and Signage:

- Install emergency phone boxes and security cameras along the Pont de Rennes Bridge and other areas near the gorge. Consider fencing at all locations adjacent to public areas;
- Create signage along Lake Avenue guiding visitors to High Falls. Consider arrival gateways and theme signage;
- Improve lighting under all bridges leading to High Falls;
- Locate signs along the Pont de Rennes Bridge to highlight local landmarks and history.

Environmental/Sustainable Design:

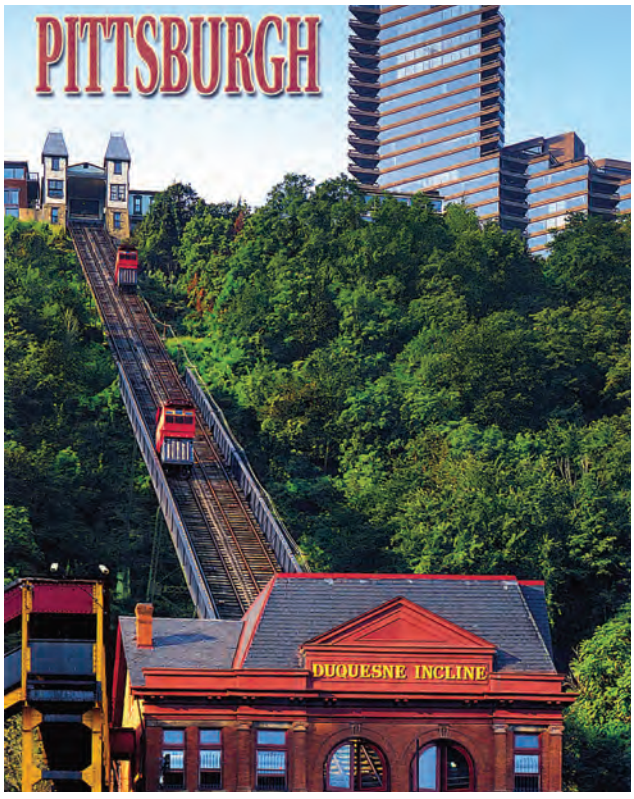
- Create a nature park on the lower plateau on lands being remediated by RG&E. Determine balance of desired human interaction with the amount of trail along the river;
- Locate signs along the Pont De Rennes Bridge to highlight wildlife within the gorge including the periodic visits by the falcons from the Kodak Tower;
- Review materials used for improvements to favor those that are sustainable.

High Falls Village Long Range

The High Falls Long Range Plan would take a number of years to accomplish. Therefore, intervening events might have an impact on the viability of any element. The aspects of the short-range, more implementable parts have been rolled into this longer vision as if they exist, or will be done. Even some elements of the long range view could happen earlier if development conditions are right. This vision is intended to demonstrate what the area might look like in 15 to 20 years.

Building upon short-term solutions, long-term suggestions for the High Falls Village fall into two major areas:

- Allow small development and entrepreneurial activity drive the development of the area. The City should restrict itself to creating a plan framework and assistance for private development;



Incline railway, Pittsburgh, PA.

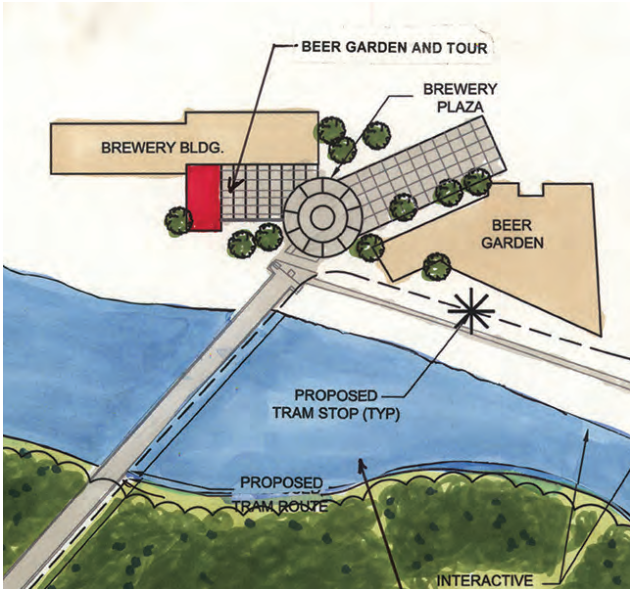
River North Long Range Plan.

- The area should be looked upon as an attraction, creating activity surrounding High Falls.

While housing and mixed-use is a viable part of the redevelopment of High Falls, there are other components that could create a more sustained activity level over longer periods of time. The ByWard Market of Ottawa and the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto could be studied and might provide a model to be emulated, with an eye to capitalizing on existing and new attractions.

One important consideration in developing a long-term plan for High Falls Village is connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, especially those linking to the area from south of the Inner Loop. It would also be important to create a cross-axis from the High Falls Brewery to Frontier Field. Long-term recommendations include:

- Lower the Inner Loop to grade at State Street, making a park-like drive with navigable crossing opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians;
- Extend the rubber wheeled hydrogen tram described in the High Falls short-term solutions to connect with Main Street;
- Provide a river walk under the railroad and Inner Loop bridges along the Genesee River;
- As remediation is completed, redevelop buildings at the Genesee River level below the falls;
- Provide a light rail station for commuters to High Falls Village and downtown.



Proposed High Falls Brewery Beer Garden.

Suggested attractions

High Falls Brewery

Create a special focal point at the east end of the Pont de Rennes Bridge, including a Beer Garden or Tasting Tour in the brewery. This could connect to the park and falls.

Pont de Rennes Bridge

Redesign the bridge to allow small hydrogen powered trams to use it as a crossing route and for enhanced viewing opportunities for pedestrians to see the falls and the natural areas on the river below. The bridge would become the cross-river extension of Platt Street.

Rochester/Hydrogen Village

Near the West end of the bridge, a new building and conversion of other existing structures would be the Energy Demonstration and Museum complex. This would trace the history of power in Rochester from hydro to coal to hydro again. It would provide a demonstration of hydrogen for heating some of the local buildings and include a hydrogen fueling station for the trams and private vehicles. RG&E should allow more use of their facilities, piece by piece, for expansion of the energy demonstration, especially for alternative power options being developed locally such as fuel cells, ethanol and wind.

High Falls Visitor's Center

This existing attraction would be maintained and enhanced, including the elevator to the river level previously recommended. The elevator would allow closer approaches to and viewing of the falls.

Pensione Hotel site plan.

Pensione Hotel

This small hotel situated over a street level arcade along Platt Street, designed to reflect this European custom, would provide a place for travelers to stay. Shops would be located along the arcade at street level and behind the hotel a proposed parking garage would support Kodak Offices, the hotel and Frontier Field parking. A skywalk crossing State Street from the hotel to the restaurants and attractions should be considered.

Frontier Field

This existing attraction would remain as the western anchor and terminus to the cross axis of Platt Street. The tram would serve it before and after events.

Entrance to Frontier Field, Rochester, NY.

Indoor Market

There exists an opportunity to have an indoor market building housing food sales outlets for existing local purveyors such as a fish market, meat market, cheese market, green grocer and baker. It could also house smaller outlets such as ethnic shops, candy and nut shops, specialty stores, a wine store, snack shop, dairy, pharmacy and 24-hour deli.

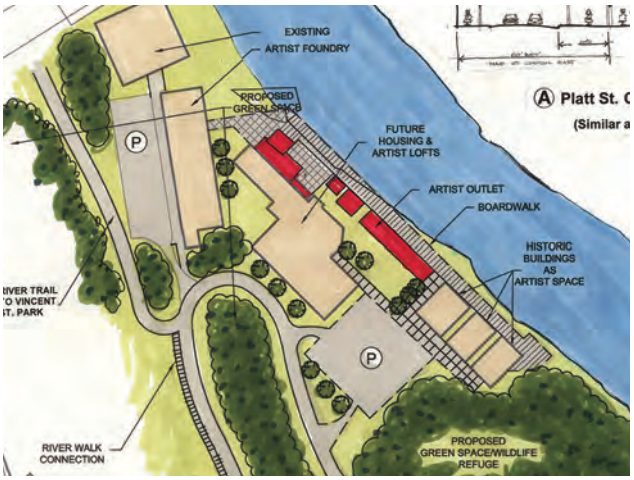
In this instance, Canadian examples can provide excellent models for indoor shops to be rented and possible surrounding sidewalk venders on special days or for events. This market could serve the local residents and some city and suburban and downtown residents. It need not be on the main cross axis although visitors to the area for the day might find their way to this location.

Reinforce the street face along State Street

Currently, the west side of State Street north of the railroad overpass is ill-defined because of its use as a surface parking lot. A parking garage should be constructed to serve Kodak, the Pensione Hotel, and ballpark events. State Street could be lined with a new mid-rise mixed-use development including a covered street level arcade of shops. A secondary pedestrian cross axis would connect the heart of High Falls, past WXXI, across State Street, through the State Street arcade and parking garage behind, to the ball park.

Light Rail Station

At the intersection of the railroad and State Street, adjacent to the new parking garage would be an elevated light rail station. The tracks already exist to provide commuter light rail in the future. It is close to business and government activity on State Street and nearby.



Proposed artist lofts and community.

Streetscape

Streetscape amenities, especially street trees, but also tram or bus stop shelters, benches, special paving, and attractive lighting should be developed along State and Platt Streets. Along Andrews Street a street front connection could be installed from the former IBM building to the new riverfront development with a through connection to the proposed at-grade crossing of the Inner Loop and into High Falls.

River Level Development

A cluster of buildings with some historic significance is located where the road to the low area turns and the river trail continues northward to Vincent Street Park along the west side of the river. These buildings could be revitalized as an artist community with loft housing, artist outlets and workspaces/studios. One of the buildings seems especially suited to being an artist's foundry. The area to the south along the river would be made a nature preserve since it is home to a number of bird species and other wildlife. By keeping the river trail through Upper Falls, it would avoid disturbing this natural zone and attract pedestrian traffic to the High Falls area from downtown.

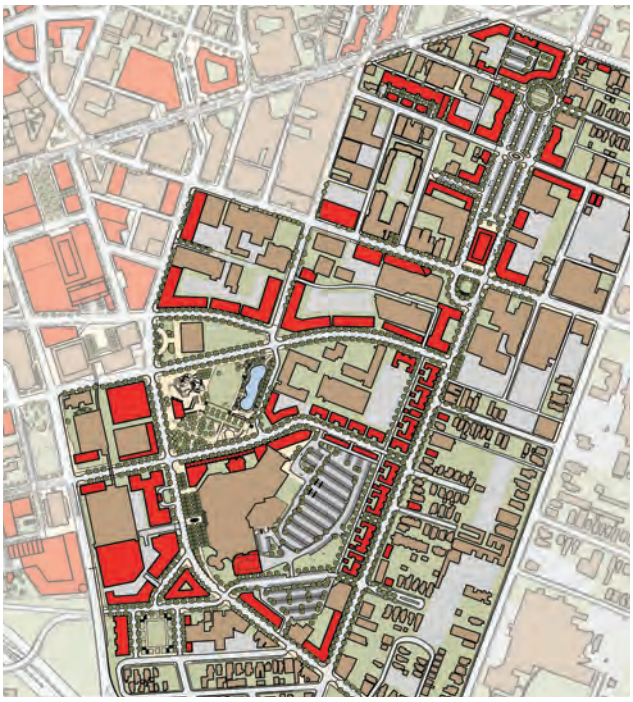
Riverfront housing at Corn Hill Landing, Rochester, NY.

CONCLUSION

The River North Focus Area has tremendous potential for growth given its proximity to the Genesee River, the unique 96-foot High Falls, extensive history and prior City investment. Infrastructure exists that could support many improvements to help the area gain a critical mass of residential, commercial office development while improving the public realm. ▲

Potential riverfront housing development at Genesee Crossroads Park.

Focus Area Three



Observation

Ill-advised road building and Urban Renewal implemented in the 1950s, 60s and 70s resulted in a barely used section of expressway that blights its surroundings and creates a barrier between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, large areas of vacant land, vastly overscaled streets and poorly designed buildings.

Recommendation

Eliminating the southeast portion of the Inner Loop may be the single most transformational infrastructure project we could pursue at this time. It would enable the reintegration of downtown with some of the city's finest neighborhoods, and add 30–40 acres of developable land to the city's tax base. It would make it possible to add quantity to the city's downtown housing stock in a proven location and to create a true center for the East End. It should be given a high priority.

Southeast Loop

DISCUSSION

This area lies within the boundaries formed by South Clinton Avenue, Court Street, Scio Street, East Main Street, Alexander Street, Monroe Avenue and Marshall Street. It intersects with the Main Street focus area at University Avenue and the entrance to the Inner Loop. The area includes the Strong National Museum of Play, Manhattan Square Park and the section of Inner Loop running from Main Street south, then west to I-490.

Two of the greatest destructive forces in mid-twentieth century American cities, highway building and Urban Renewal, profoundly impacted the southeast portion of downtown. Proposed as early as 1951, the Inner Loop encircled the downtown area by the mid-1960s, effectively isolating it from adjacent neighborhoods, and making it easier for motorists to bypass downtown entirely. Consequentially, as is often the case with urban expressways, many of the adjoining neighborhoods lost value and became even more distressed than they had been prior to the construction of the Inner Loop.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s some of these distressed neighborhoods, located in the area stretching from East Avenue to South Clinton Avenue, were cleared for the Southeast Loop Urban Renewal project. A "new town, downtown" was proposed to take the place of the old neighborhoods of wood frame dwellings and mixed-use buildings. This new town was to have over 3,000 housing units organized around a new park, along with office and commercial spaces. Some parts of this plan were actually realized. Manhattan Square Park was built and is today undergoing extensive alterations. New housing, such as 10 Manhattan Square Drive and Midtown Manor apartments, was built at Manhattan Square Drive and East Broad Street. The entire street network in the area was

reorganized. With the near demise of the New York State Urban Development Corporation in the mid-1970s, progress on the Southeast Loop project came to a halt. Soon after, the city began to sell off tracts of land to developers for individual buildings, most of which failed to engage the streets and degraded the pedestrian experience. The Strong Museum acquired the largest tract of land for what is now, in its newly expanded form, the largest single attraction downtown, drawing more than 600,000 people from all over the nation each year. Today these visitors find a district dominated by large tracts of vacant land and oversized streets, punctuated by a scattering of poorly conceived buildings, most of which were designed at an inhuman scale, with little or no thought given to their impact on the civic realm.

The Southeast Loop area needs to be seamlessly connected to the greater downtown and the southeast neighborhoods centered on Monroe, East and University Avenues. Streets need to be "right-sized" and reconceived as complete environments for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and private vehicles, and developed as the outdoor living room of the occupants of the buildings that enfront them and the visitors who travel them. Large blocks need to be broken into smaller blocks in order to facilitate greater connectivity for pedestrians as well as vehicles and to allow traffic to diffuse itself over a more finely grained street network. Smaller blocks will facilitate development by making it easier to establish more manageable parcels. Most importantly, these new and reconfigured streets need to be lined as continuously as possible with pedestrian oriented building frontages. Streets, squares and parks may be thought of as the horizontal plane of the civic realm, while building frontages are the vertical plane that defines and encloses space. No matter how well designed, a street or other civic space without building frontages is an incomplete civic realm and will not be a vital part of our downtown. Filling in the many gaps along our streets is the best way to enliven our civic realm and connect the various districts of downtown together into a walkable whole. The design team looked at the area holistically to identify ways to complete the network of streets and blocks in the area through: the elimination of the Inner Loop; the narrowing of overly wide streets; the creation of new streets; and extensive infill development.

CHALLENGES

- Overcome the barrier created by the underutilized Inner Loop between downtown and the southeast neighborhoods centered on Monroe, East and University Avenues;
- "Right-size" wide streets that discourage pedestrian activity and encourage speeding and other aggressive driving practices;
- Break up "superblocks" that impede pedestrian and vehicular connections;
- Maximize development potential of vacant and underutilized land caused by demolition and inappropriate development.

Southeast Loop existing conditions.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Removal of the Inner Loop makes it possible to reconnect University Avenue and create a major gateway at the east end of the Main Street corridor;
- Removal of the Inner Loop makes it possible to create a center for the East End that provides sites for new development, civic space and parking;
- Removal of the Inner Loop makes it possible to repair the damage done to South Union Street, creating new infill development opportunities that complement the historic housing stock on the east side of the street;
- Removal of the Inner Loop makes it possible to reconnect Monroe Avenue to downtown through the addition of continuous building frontages;
- Removal of the Inner Loop makes it possible to restore Wadsworth Square to a position of prominence and reintegrate the Wadsworth Square neighborhood with downtown;
- A narrower Chestnut Street makes it possible to expand and improve Manhattan Square Park and create a major civic space in front of the Strong Museum;
- An extended Woodbury Boulevard improves connections to Manhattan Square Park and creates new opportunities for infill development;
- Extensive new infill development creates new neighborhoods that provide a built-in constituency for Manhattan Square Park and other downtown destinations;
- A narrower Broad Street provides new building site opportunities that would create a stronger public realm along that corridor.

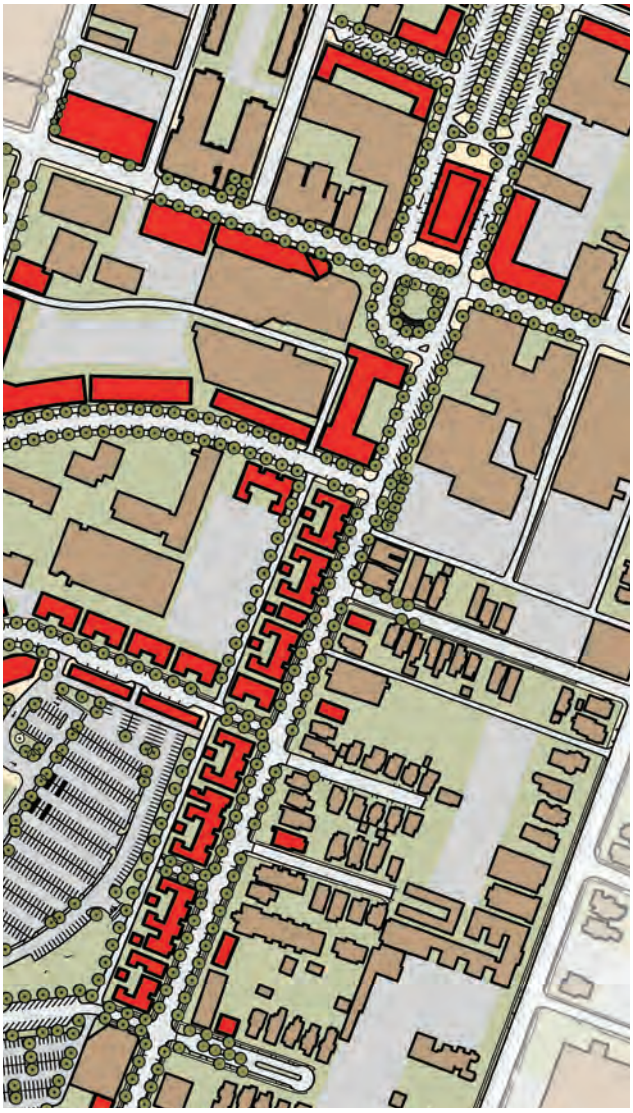
Site plan for development of Union Street between Main and Broad Streets.

Existing conditions of the Inner Loop south of Main Street, Rochester, NY.

SITES FOR INTERVENTION

Inner Loop

The Inner Loop can be divided into three distinct segments. Two segments carry significant traffic. The third segment, from East Main Street going south to I-490, is highly underutilized. While all of the Inner Loop creates barriers between Center City and adjacent neighborhoods, unnecessary congestion at the interchanges, and has a generally negative effect on its surroundings, the southeast segment is the least justifiable and is the subject of this focus area. It occupies valuable real estate for the purpose of moving non-existent traffic around downtown that could be used for far more productive activities and could help connect downtown to successful neighborhoods to the east.



Site plan showing proposed infill development along former southeast Inner Loop route.

Recommendations

- Eliminate the Inner Loop between East Main Street and I-490 to the south, replacing it with a normative two-way city street that includes on-street parking on both sides;
- Convert Howell Street to a two-way street that runs west from Monroe Avenue, which would split into the existing entrance and exit ramps to I-490 just beyond the South Clinton Avenue bridge;
- Add a new street that runs east from Monroe Avenue and connects Howell Street with South Union Street. This would be a secondary street that serves as a vehicular connection and access to a major parking area, but not as a primary pedestrian oriented street;
- Allow Union Street and Broadway to continue as two-way from Monroe Avenue to Meigs Street;
- The segment of the Inner Loop from the I-490 junction just north of West Main Street to East Main Street carries a significant amount of traffic, essentially functioning as a major east-west street and complementing other such streets in the downtown street network. While it is neces-

Example of good infill solution.

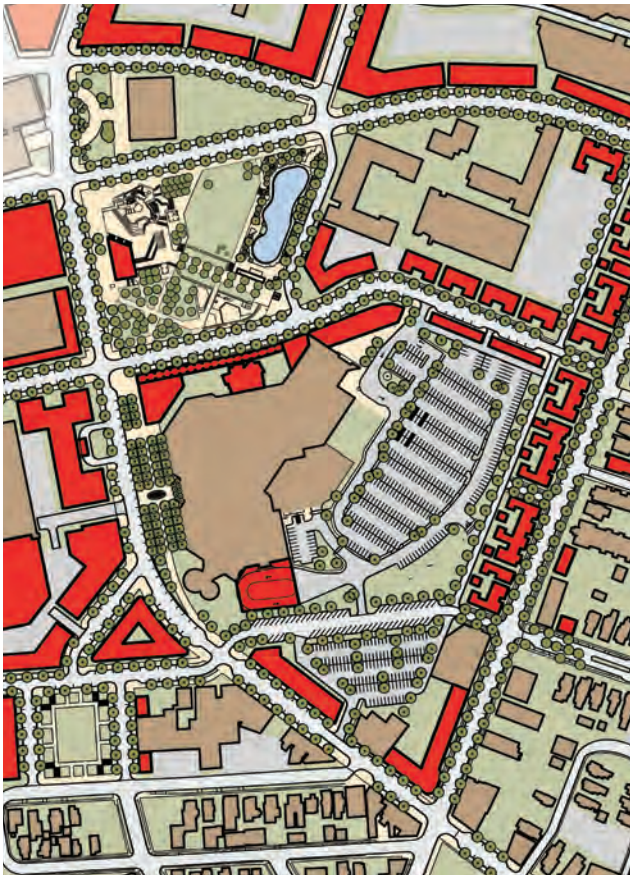
sary to maintain a high capacity roadway at this location, its eventual conversion to an urban multi-way boulevard should be the goal.

Existing Streets and Alleyways

The Southeast Loop Urban Renewal project of the 1970s completely erased the original fine grained development pattern of relatively narrow streets and small blocks. In its place was constructed a network of overly wide streets and super blocks that discourage pedestrian activity, obstruct connections within and beyond the area and encourage aggressive driving. The area can be substantially improved by making a number of changes to the street system.

Recommendations

- Narrow Chestnut Street to match the width of Monroe Avenue. Land gained on the east side of the street would enable the creation of a new tree-lined "grand promenade" in front of the Strong National Museum of Play. It would also allow for expansion of Manhattan Square Park;
- Create a new diagonal street connecting Chestnut Street to Howell Street. This would provide a route for vehicles to access I-490, but more importantly it would provide developable parcels for new building frontages that would connect to Monroe Avenue and the Wadsworth Square neighborhood;
- Extend Woodbury Boulevard to South Union Street, making it a two-way street with on-street parking on both sides. This would break up the largest superblock, increase connectivity and create new addresses for real estate development. The Strong Museum would gain additional land on the south side of the street that, in combination with land gained from the narrowing of Chestnut, would facilitate potential museum expansion at the northwest corner of their site;
- Narrow Broad Street east of Broadway to match and align with Court Street, making both Broad and Court Streets two-way streets with on-street parking on both sides. Broad Street should also be moved slightly to the south to enable the construction of a liner building in front of the existing Corporate Place parking garage;
- Remove the extra one block long lane that currently exists on the south side of East Avenue in front of the Corporate Place building;
- Re-open Vine Street as a one-way street with parallel and angled parking;
- Extend and create new service alleys in various locations to provide rear access to properties for parking, trash removal and similar functions. Alleys reduce the need for curb cuts on pedestrian oriented streets, allowing for greater safety and more on-street parking.



Site plan showing some recommended street changes.

Manhattan Square Park

Manhattan Square Park, the most important legacy of the Southeast Loop Urban Renewal project, is the principal civic space in the study area. It is currently undergoing major reconstruction. The narrowing of Chestnut Street and extension of Woodbury Boulevard present additional opportunities for improvement.

Recommendations

- Narrow Chestnut Street to add to the west side of the park. Remove the "pork chop" intersection at Court Street. Utilize the additional space to construct a new above grade restaurant building connected to the existing below grade restaurant, thereby providing the visibility needed to make the restaurant at the park viable;
- Construct a grand staircase from Chestnut Street down to the concourse in axial alignment with the existing main walkway. Provide heating coils for snow melting along this major pedestrian way;
- Install a monumental piece of artwork at the terminus of the main walkway in a new plaza at the corner of Manhattan Square Drive and the Woodbury Boulevard extension.

Bryant Park, New York City, similar to grand promenade proposed at Strong National Museum of Play.

Strong National Museum of Play

The Strong National Museum of Play, constructed in 1980 and recently expanded, presents both opportunities and problems to the surrounding area. It is potentially an energizing entity to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, but it is insular and isolated. Few visitors venture beyond the concrete walls of the building and the massive parking lot. Any pedestrian trying to enter from the street will find it challenging to locate the entrance. The building and grounds occupy a very large site that makes it difficult to achieve a fine grained urban street and block network. Given the physical realities, the design team was able to offer a number of suggestions for improvement.

Recommendations

- Create a "Grand Promenade", lined on each side with a double row of trees, along Chestnut Street, converting the front of the museum from a suburban style front lawn into one of downtown's premier civic spaces.

Design elements of the new "Grand Promenade" might include:

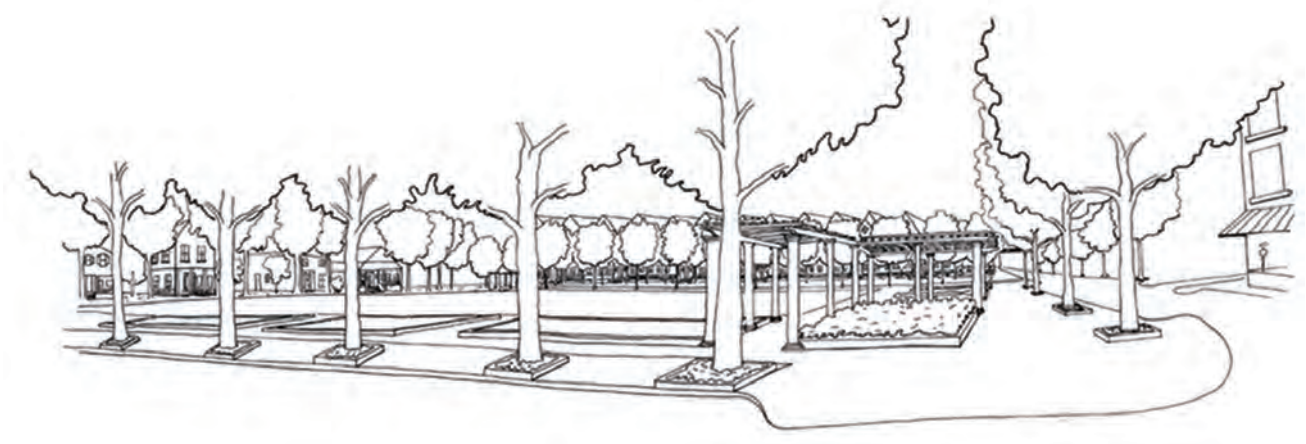
- A central focal point in front of the large glazed "eye" of the museum. This focal point could include a fountain or a major public art piece. The existing Albert Paley sculpture should be moved to this or another appropriate location along the promenade;
- Smaller artworks placed along the length of the promenade, possibly of a playful nature in keeping with its location in front of the museum;
- Kiosks for food vendors, newsstands and the like if feasible;
- New lighting, benches, pavements and plantings. The promenade should be designed to avoid hidden spaces to ensure security;
- Locate future museum expansions at the cor-

ner of Chestnut and Woodbury, at the current school bus entrance near the butterfly pavilion, and along the new Woodbury Boulevard extension near the current entrance. Expansions at these locations would contribute to the vitality of Chestnut Street and help mask the surface parking behind the museum;

- Construct a covered walkway from the corner of Chestnut and Woodbury to the museum entrance to identify and facilitate pedestrian access. The Strong Museum is an important anchor that needs to be better integrated into the greater downtown context. The importance of a highly visible pedestrian connection to the street cannot be overemphasized.

Wadsworth Square

Wadsworth Square was donated to the city by the Wadsworth family, major landholders in the Genesee Valley in the 19th century. One of Rochester's original Olmstead squares, it had a school on its west side and was edged with houses. It acted as a well defined outdoor room for its neighborhood. By the 1970s the school was gone, the Inner Loop had obliterated all buildings on the north side and the entire square was paved over. In the 1980s the neighborhood began to revive. The pavement was removed from the square, replaced informally by grass and trees, without regard to its original design. The removal of the Inner Loop will present the opportunity to re-establish Wadsworth Square as an important focal point.



Wadsworth Square current conditions and perspective drawing.

Recommendations

- Redesign the square as a formal urban square, edged and defined by new buildings;
- Preserve a central lawn for residents to use in an active manner, but surround it by formally designed walkways and planting areas, with regularly spaced trees;
- Use grape arbors or similar structures as part of the design to provide a sense of enclosure.

North Union Street

In recent years, the section of East Avenue from Chestnut Street to Alexander Street has seen a proliferation of restaurants and night spots. This general area has come to be known as the "East End." The Inner Loop divides this area into separate districts, the "East End" and the "Upper East End." The removal of the Inner Loop will present the opportunity to unite these two districts around a dynamic new center.

Recommendations

- Create a great civic space along North Union Street that would function as the central square of the East End while accommodating a substantial amount of parking. By closing the street to vehicles on occasion, this space could be transformed into an exciting, active festival site.

Design elements of the new civic space to include:

- Separate Union Street into north and southbound lanes with a large circle at the north end, an arcaded market building at the south end, and a center parking area with tree lined sidewalks, promenades and large plazas or lawns at each end;
- An arcaded market building at East Avenue and North Union Street to anchor the East End district, providing it with a center focal point where the Inner Loop currently divides it;
- New mid-rise mixed-use buildings edging this space to provide spatial definition and inject new vitality;
- A smaller civic space south of East Avenue where the northbound and southbound lanes of Union Street come together. This space would provide a transition to the quieter precincts of South Union Street, serving as a gathering space directly on East Avenue, further anchoring this location as the center of the East End. It could contain a performance stage or pavilion.

Additional possibilities for the new civic space include:

- The currently depressed Inner Loop area directly below the space could possibly be utilized for additional underground parking in appropriate areas;
- The proposed Main Street trolley could circulate through this space at the eastern terminus of its route, capitalizing on the availability of parking and proximity to the large potential new residential population;
- In the future, as the storage of vehicles becomes a less critical concern, this space could evolve. Some of the parking could be eliminated to open up the center for expanded lawns and plazas and a second market building could be built at the north end.

Example of an arcade, New Orleans, LA.

New Construction

New construction within the study area should be primarily residential or mixed-use background buildings. In most locations, mid-rise (4–10 stories) construction will be appropriate. It is more desirable to build a greater number of lower buildings that fill out and enliven the street frontages than to build a few towers that soak up market potential leaving too much vacant land. There are some exceptions to this general principle, which follow:

Recommendations

- New construction along South Union Street, south of Broad Street should be predominately low rise residential, designed to harmonize with the historic housing stock on the east side of the street. The west side of these new buildings should be reasonably attractive, as they will be seen by visitors to the Strong Museum. Underground parking may be feasible, as this housing would be constructed directly above the depressed Inner Loop right-of-way;
- Construct a new 10–15 story building at Chestnut Street and the new diagonal street, terminating the vista from Monroe Avenue, much as the Sibley Tower terminates the vista from East Avenue. Terminated vistas provide a sense of destination and are often very desirable sites for retail uses;
- The plan proposes a hotel at the southwest corner of Chestnut Street and Woodbury Boulevard. A new headquarters building for Eastman Savings and Loan (ESL) has since been announced for this site. It is imperative that this building be designed and sited in such a way as to enhance the pedestrian experience. A new parking garage adjacent to the Washington Square Garage has also been proposed as part of the ESL project. This garage should be designed to function as an extension of the existing Washington Square garage so as to avoid the need for an additional vehicular access point. The garage should be designed to effectively direct pedestrians to Chestnut Street, as well as to the new building. Garages are major generators of pedestrian traffic and should always be designed to encourage pedestrian activity on our streets;
- Expand existing buildings within the study area including the Frontier Building, Corporate Place, One City Center and the Washington Square garage. All of these buildings have unfortunate frontages, set back from the street. The opportunity exists to extend these buildings to the sidewalk and provide active pedestrian oriented uses at ground level.

Existing conditions of Monroe Avenue at the Inner Loop, Rochester, NY.

The same view with the Inner Loop removed and new buildings terminating the vista.

Parking

Parking is a reality that drives development. The need to accommodate parking is the principle difference between the "old" urbanism and the "new" urbanism. The design team recommended three strategies for the placement of parking to be used throughout the Southeast Loop Focus Area and the entire downtown.

Recommendations

- On-street parking has several advantages and should be extensively deployed throughout Center City. It can satisfy a significant portion of parking demand without demolishing building stock. It has a traffic calming effect, providing a safety buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic. Studies have shown it has a greater economic impact than other types of parking. The reconfigured streets in the study area can accommodate over 600 additional spaces. On-street parking should be managed and priced to maintain an optimal level of open spaces. The use of new technologies for metered parking that allow payment by credit card or even cell phone should be considered;
- Masking is the practice of concealing parking areas or garages with buildings. The plan utilizes this strategy extensively around the Strong Museum parking lot as well as at the Corporate Place and Washington Square garages. Most of the proposed infill construction is designed to mask parking areas or garages behind the buildings;
- The integration of parking with civic space is a common practice in European cities and a few North American cities. Many of the great boulevards and squares of Europe contain a significant amount of parking. This strategy is proposed at North Union Street in the East End. Parking is provided in a way that enhances rather than degrades the city. In this case it is readily achievable, economical and allows for the replacement of the 2 Vine parking lot and other nearby surface parking facilities.

CONCLUSION

The Southeast Loop Focus Area occupies some of the most valuable real estate in Center City. While it is currently underutilized and underdeveloped, with careful planning and a consistent, coordinated effort, the opportunity exists to realize the original vision of a "new town, downtown" with a superior public realm that completes and connects this portion of downtown to its adjacent neighborhoods. The removal of the southeast portion of the Inner Loop can pave the way for an even more visionary transformation of the remainder of the Inner Loop. ▲

Examples of the integration of parking and civic space, Austin, TX.

Focus Area Four

Main Street

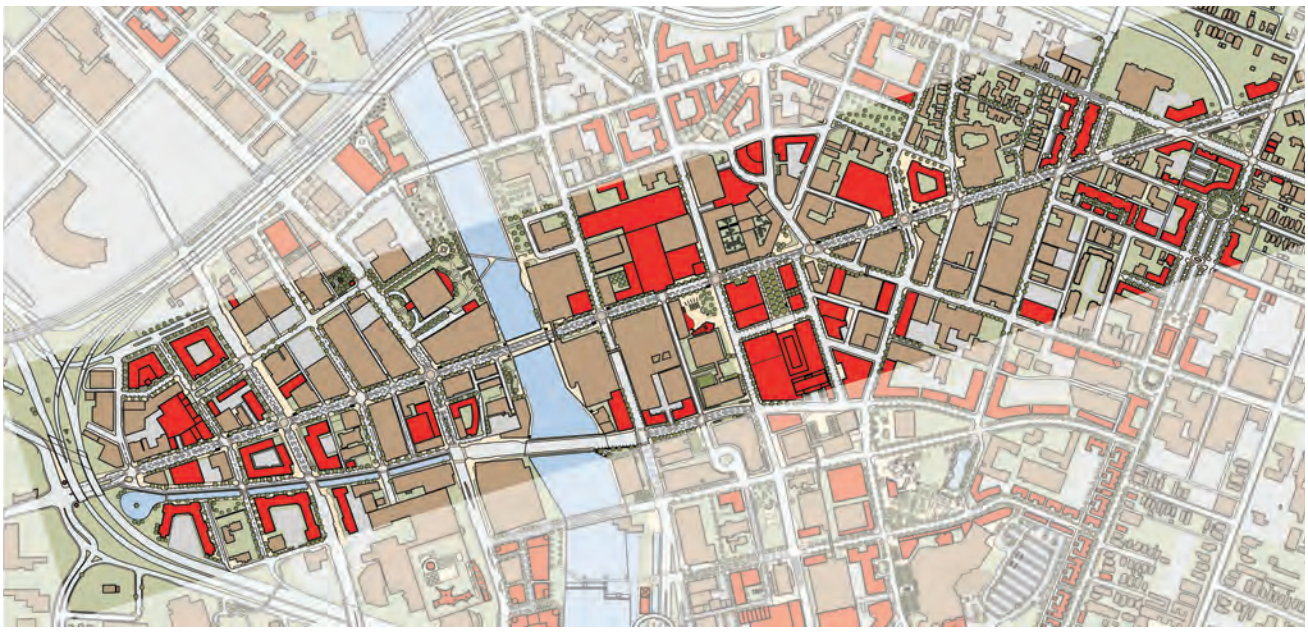
DISCUSSION

The Main Street Focus Area encompasses the Main Street corridor from the I-490 bridge at the western end to the Union Street intersection at the eastern end. This area interfaces with all of the other focus areas. The Main Street corridor is the common public realm space that ties all of Center City together.

The Main Street Focus Area also includes the Cascade District north of West Main Street and west of North Plymouth Avenue within the Inner Loop, the West Broad Street corridor from West Main Street to the Genesee River, and the portion of Chestnut Street north of East Main Street to the Inner Loop.

Main Street is arguably the finest public realm corridor in the Rochester region, possessing a relatively long, continuous, tall, dense urban character of high architectural quality. Historically, this was the hub of the community, alive with commercial activity, filled with office space and active commercial, retail, and entertainment establishments. It was a typical vibrant American city of the early 20th century. Over time some of the architecture has been replaced with construction of lesser quality or has been demolished, leaving large areas of parking especially at each end. Today, most of the retail establishments are gone, but much of the office space and some of the cultural/entertainment venues remain in use. The street is active with pedestrian and vehicular traffic during the day but is quite inactive in the evenings.

Historic Main Street, Rochester, NY, (Albert Stone Collection).



Many buildings along the corridor have very high vacancy rates but significant uses and destinations remain. Main Street is home to the Hochstein School of Music, the Clarion and Hyatt Hotels, the Monroe County Building, the Powers Building, the Eastman School of Music and Eastman Theater, the YMCA, Downstairs Cabaret Theatre, Midtown Plaza, Monroe Community College Downtown Campus, and the offices of several banks and law firms. The Genesee River passes under the Main Street Bridge in the heart of downtown (a viewing spot for fireworks events). Attractions include the International Jazz Festival, the Twilight Criterium bicycle race, and numerous parades and charity walks/runs.

The other areas studied beyond the immediate Main Street corridor are characterized by a scattering of buildings amid parking lots. The Cascade District contains several industrial warehouse structures that have been restored to lofts, apartments and businesses. This area was once filled with similar three and four story brick structures.

Broad Street has a mixture of fine historic structures and unfortunate new additions. It follows the path of the historic Erie Canal of 1825, and elements of the canal and the replacement subway tunnel still remain beneath the street. In the Broad Street area are Thompson-Reuters Publishing, St. Luke's Church, the Blue Cross Arena, Gannett Newspaper, City School District offices, the Jonathan Child House and the Erie Canal viaduct (Broad Street Bridge).

Chestnut Street was extended north of Main Street in the 1970s. It was intended to create a more regular street grid, but it is too wide, does not mesh well with the historic street network and creates several awkward, hard to develop spaces. There has been no new construction along North Chestnut Street since it was extended, and it is enfronted almost continuously by parking lots for its entire length.

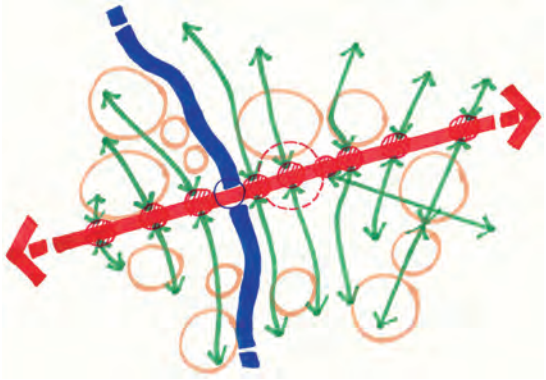
CHALLENGES

- Make Main Street a vibrant 24/7 regional destination;
- Correct architectural and urban design flaws that detract from the face of Main Street;
- Involve Monroe County as an active partner in the planning process for downtown;
- Build up each end of Main Street with dense new development so as to extend the powerful public realm character of the corridor to each gateway;
- Engage the river corridor in a stronger manner;
- Implement a parking strategy that includes on-street parking on Main Street and strategically locates structured parking designed to generate pedestrian traffic on Main Street;
- Enhance the Main Street corridor to make it more attractive for pedestrians;
- Develop dense mixed-use/residential neighborhoods connected to the Main Street corridor;
- Design and implement new transit systems on Main Street and adjacent streets to address the energy and lifestyle challenges ahead;
- Recognize that Main Street and Center City are transitioning from one era to another and our planning and revitalization efforts need to reflect this fact.

Main Street at the Main Street Bridge, Rochester, NY.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The strong, simple linear quality of Main Street offers several advantages for successful redevelopment, including a powerful visual image, easy to understand circulation patterns, the ability to view public realm all at once, and the ease of incorporating a rail transit system;
- The width of Main Street is ideal for accommodating the pedestrian, vehicular traffic, and future transit systems in harmony;
- A considerable number of major streets intersect Main Street, creating nodes with great development and pedestrian enhancement potential;
- The Main Street intersection with the Genesee River offers easy interface connections to enliven the pedestrian experience;
- Main Street contains much historic architecture that can be enhanced or preserved to enrich the pedestrian experience and provide downtown with a unique identity;
- There are many acres of cleared and strategically located land in the form of parking lots for new development.



Main Street diagram.

Observation

The physical qualities of Main Street; its long linear straight character; its high quality architecture; its dense urban scale; its interface with the Genesee River; and its location relative to potential surrounding neighborhoods give this grand public realm the opportunity to become Rochester's premier destination. Historically, Main Street was the center of Rochester life and it could once again regain that distinction.

Recommendations

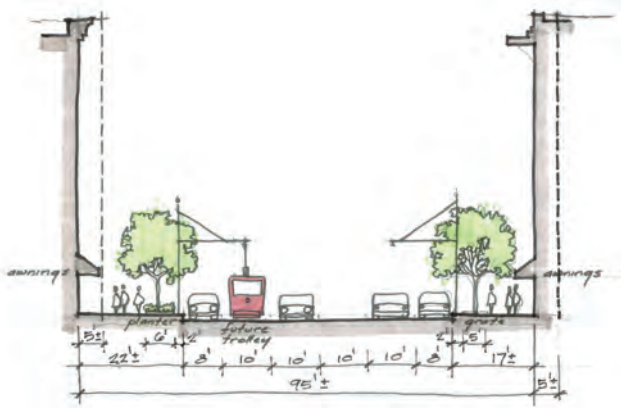
To develop Main Street to its fullest potential, its current assets should be enhanced and expanded upon. The underutilized properties at each end should be developed to the fullest densities and urban scale possible; excellence in architecture and contextual design should be the standard; the intersections at the major cross streets and river should be celebrated; major gateways at each end should be created; the street layout should be redesigned for simplicity to focus on the pedestrian experience and should be embellished to encourage "green" elements and artwork; and a trolley system should be initiated as the beginning of a 21st century transit/vehicular network for Rochester.

Main Street from Chestnut Street, Rochester, NY.

SITES FOR INTERVENTION

Main Street Corridor

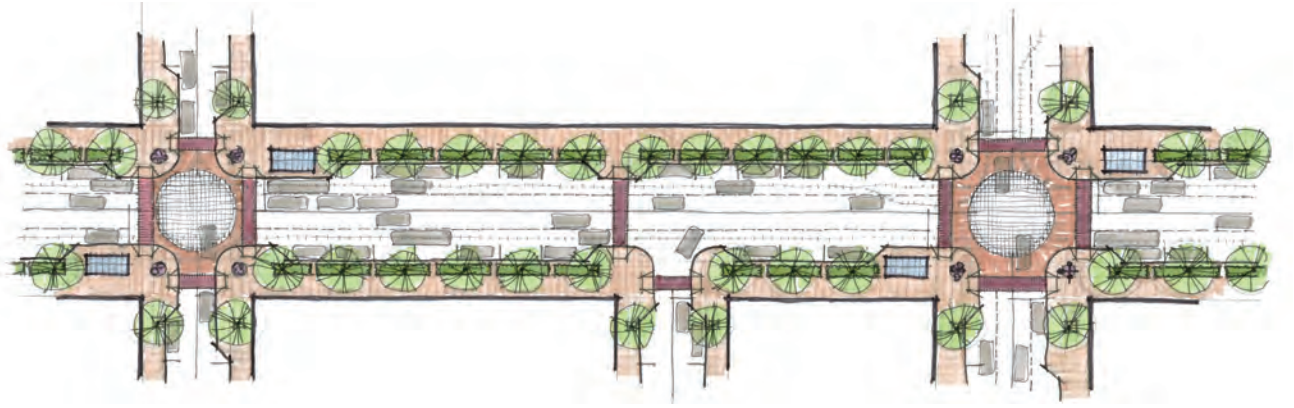
Most charrette participants and post-charrette work groups identified Main Street as the most important piece of the built environment in Center City. It should be given the highest priority for rejuvenation. Its physical majesty in large part remains, but it is in a state of dormancy and design teams believe it could be rejuvenated to its former grandeur as the vibrant and symbolic heart of the community.



Proposed typical section through Main Street.

Recommendations

- Emulate the physical characteristics of State Street in Chicago. Visit this street and others that might be similarly appropriate;
- Provide four travel lanes (10 foot width for each), two in each direction. Employ simple striping with no specific turning lanes (left or right); Advance turn signal lights may be installed. Right turns on red should generally be prohibited;
- Provide metered, on-street, 8 foot side parallel parking spaces on both sides of the street for its entire length (except at the Main Street Bridge over the river);
- Construct an edged planting strip for trees, ground cover, shrubs and flowers on both sides of Main Street for its entire length across Center City. It should by 4–6 feet wide, set 2–3 feet from the curb, and be broken at intervals of roughly 25 feet by 3-foot paved spaces. New street trees should be hardy, tall, and have a somewhat open canopy that begins above the first floor level of the buildings. They should be planted at intervals of 25–40 feet and expertly maintained;
- Generously employ the use of plant containers, hanging baskets, trellises, etc;
- Redesign and replace the existing sidewalk paving in a systematic manner. The pedestrian walkway between the planting strip and buildings should be a minimum of 8–10 feet wide;
- Install curb extensions at all intersections;
- Install paved pedestrian crosswalks and decorative paving at intersections and at designated mid-block crossings. Create decorative paving at centers of designated intersections;
- Plan for future trolley system. Rails should be



Main Street schematic plan illustrating design recommendations.

located in the travel lane nearest to the curb and would be shared with vehicular traffic. Overhead wires might be supported by street light poles but separate poles may be required. Transit shelters and boarding areas should be accommodated in curb extensions at designated intersections. Trolley cars should be contemporary in design, reflective of historic cars but not copies, distinct in color and pedestrian friendly in appearance;

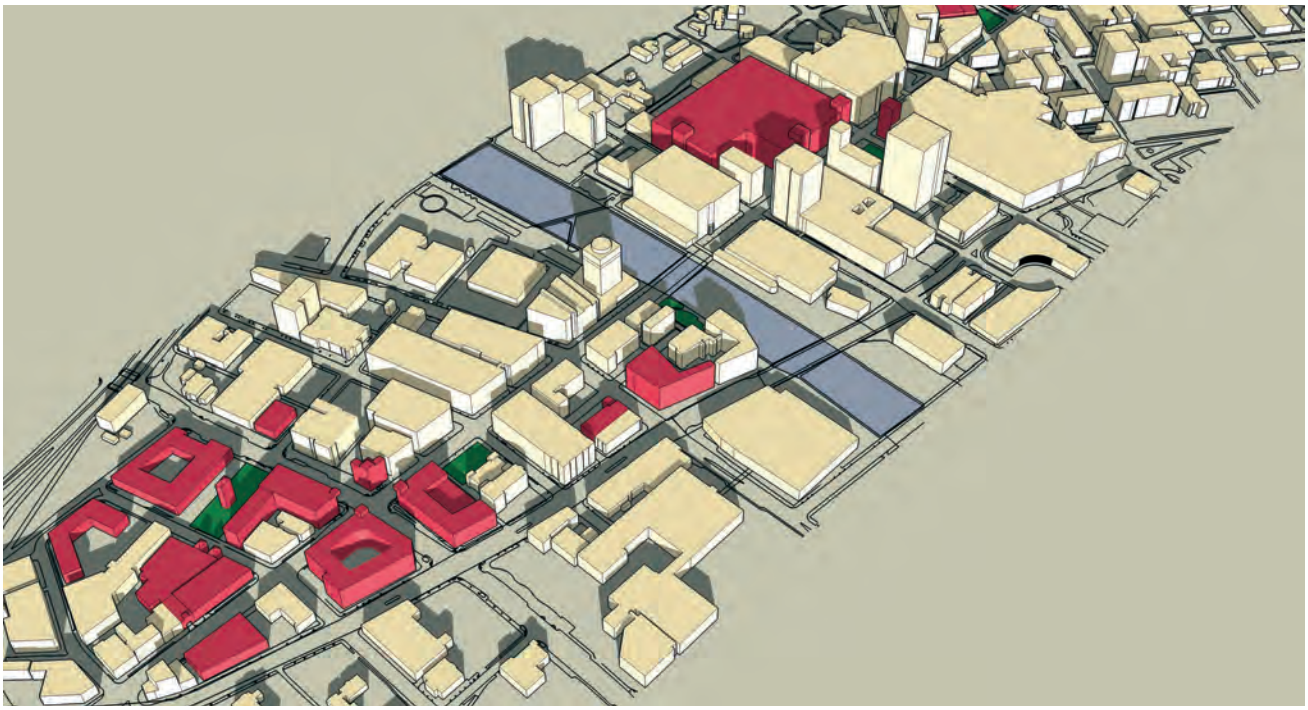
- Refurbish existing transit shelters and relocate or provide additional ones where needed for the future trolley system. Install state-of-the-art electronic schedule/arrival announcement systems;
- Implement a strategy for structured parking that favors smaller garages distributed as evenly as possible around downtown so that most locations are within a five to ten minute walk from a pedestrian entrance to a garage. Vehicular entrances should be unobtrusive yet well marked. Provide liner buildings along the street wall (two-story minimum) for retail and other uses to mask the parking function from public view. Provide well defined, well lighted pedestrian access to adjacent street. These garages will act as pedestrian traffic generators to enliven Main Street and must feed pedestrians to the streets;
- Encourage shared use arrangements during peak hours of privately owned (not publicly designated) parking facilities;
- Any remaining surface parking lots should be screened with a 10 foot minimum landscaped buffer with fence, trees and landscaping or a street wall;
- Create and adopt a lighting strategy and plan for the corridor that would include street lighting and building lighting. Replace existing davit lights and other inappropriate fixtures with new streetlights that match the current decorative lighting on Main Street;

Pocket park, Rochester, NY.

Streetscape, Philadelphia, PA.

Bethesda Row, Bethesda, MD (Rendering by Interface Multimedia).

- Install well-designed street furniture—benches, trash receptacles, news box enclosures, bike racks, etc., plus more pedestrian way-finding maps, signs and kiosks;
- Create new civic spaces along the corridor. These spaces would act as "green breaks" for pedestrian solitude or interaction. They could contain fountains, trees, lawn, ground cover, sculpture, paving, benches, chess tables, etc.;
- Enhance the gateways to the river walks at the Main Street Bridge through the addition of architectural green spaces, sculpture, and prominent stairways and walkway connections;
- Provide distinctly designed gateways to adjacent neighborhoods and districts;
- Install distinctly designed street name and gateway signage;
- Build out Main Street in its entirety from end to end with dense construction that creates a continuous, almost canyon-like, unusually powerful outdoor room;
- Re-evaluate current downtown design guidelines. Move toward a form-based code with "Design Standards" and a more powerful Project Review Committee to encourage architectural excellence in street frontages of new and remodeled buildings. Review and revise the current sign regulations to improve building signage;
- Create effective incentives to encourage first floor retail zones and second floor commercial zones along the entire length (or at designated areas) of the corridor. Provide incentives for current buildings to enhance their first floor transparencies (as well as second floor if appropriate);
- Establish a Main Street Arts program that would introduce sculpture at the intersections, gateways and civic spaces, murals on building walls, and other artistic pieces all along the corridor;
- Encourage and provide incentives for the installation of awnings and marquees on building façades;
- Develop Main Street as a dense mixed-use corridor, but encourage the uses to be primarily office use above the first and second floors. Market Main Street as a commercial corridor.



Massing model of West Main Street.

Western Gateway

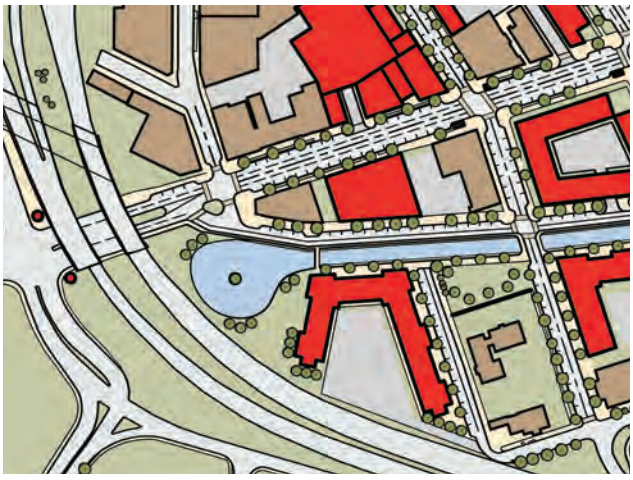
Approaching the Center City from the west on Main Street, both pedestrians and drivers experience an uninviting assembly of roadways, inadequate sidewalks, dead zones, and a huge blockading bridge structure. The bridge is aesthetically unpleasant and completely blocks out the skyline as one approaches downtown, creating a highly negative experience for pedestrians. The design team considered the scheme of dropping the I-490 roadway under Main Street as suggested in the 2000 charrette and recommends this approach as the long term solution. The team identified short term improvements that maintain the existing bridge structure.

Recommendations

- Reconstruct the roadway system at the I-490 bridge approach to increase green space between the roads and to narrow the lanes, transitioning to the 10 foot lanes of Main Street in Center City;
- Create inspiring sculpture structures at this gateway approach, not unlike but much grander than the High Falls gateway on State Street;
- Redesign the face and the underside of the I-490 bridge;

State Street Gateway to High Falls, Rochester, NY.

- Install appropriate well-designed signage on the bridge face;
- Create an effective, strong, well-designed lighting system at this entry point;
- Create a quality landscape plan for the entire gateway, adding generous amounts of green space, plantings, flowers and street trees;
- Incorporate the design ideas proposed by FRA Engineering into the gateway planning;
- Design the pedestrian walkways to be safe with well-designed lighting, traffic controls, and with inviting and interesting paving and landscaping. Make it direct and integral with the Susan B. Anthony district.



Portion of Center City Vision Plan showing western gateways.

Existing conditions at western gateway on Main Street at I-490, Rochester, NY.

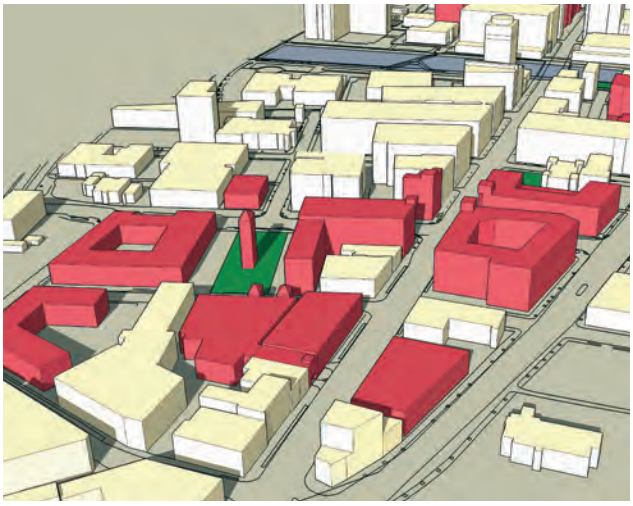
Cascade District

This mixed-use area of the city is a work in progress with quality developments that have already occurred (Buckingham Commons, the Cascade Lofts, Albert Paley Studio, etc.). Even the parking areas have been enhanced by well-designed paving and landscape features.

The district, however, has much more economic potential through wise development on the vast amount of land currently used for surface parking. In fact, the sustainability of the current developments may very well hinge on the creation of a more densely populated neighborhood or urban village environment.

Recommendations

- Extend Church Street to Washington Street to break down the size of the block, create better connections and establish a new civic green space;
- Redesign Allen Street as a main western/northern gateway into the city. Create a boulevard type street, employing a generous amount of formal tree plantings and other landscaping, and adding appropriate signage, banners, lighting and sculpture;
- Provide as much on-street parking as possible throughout the new and existing street network;
- Construct a new parking garage at the corner of Washington and Main Streets (behind the Paley Studio) incorporating liner retail/commercial buildings as feasible;
- Plan for the inclusion of a future trolley type transit system capitalizing on the parking garage;
- Encourage the development of dense, loft type, warehouse inspired, mixed-use/residential construction within the district. (Some sites may be more appropriate for townhouse units.) Each development should contain its own secure enclosed parking, preferably hidden beneath each structure (model after LoDo district in Denver, or the 3rd Ward in Milwaukee);
- The northwest corner of Main and Plymouth should be reserved for a tall, dense, mixed-use/office or residential building;
- An abundance of generous sidewalks, street trees and tree lawns, plantings and flowers, identity signage and street lighting is essential in order to create an attractive, thriving public realm;
- Incorporate distinct gateway elements into the urban fabric.

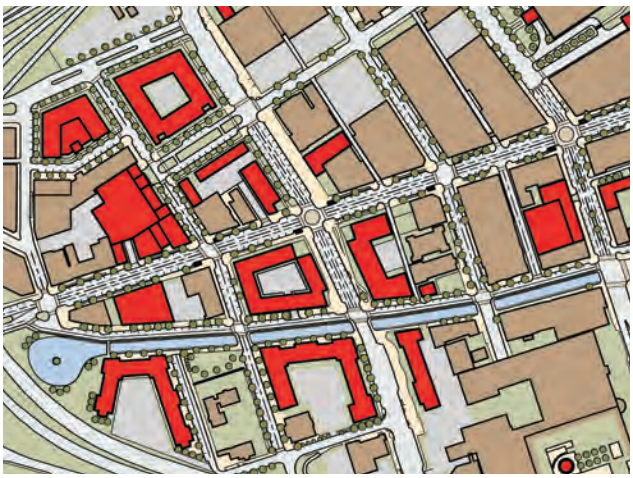


Massing model of West Main Street.

LoDo Loft Building, Denver, CO.

Broad Street Canal District

The current character of this part of Center City is quite eclectic. It is a scattered non-cohesive collection of parking lots, historic buildings (Jonathan Child house, Bevier Building, St. Luke's Church, Brewster/Burke house), and inappropriate, non-contributing structures (City School District building, Jonathan Child addition, Advantage Federal Credit Union building). This area is located in the southwest corner of Center City, and is bounded by the I-490 expressway, West Main Street, West Broad Street and Plymouth Avenue. Remnants of the old Erie Canal and subway tunnel remain beneath West Broad Street. A study is underway to determine the advisability of recreating the historic Erie Canal in some fashion. This idea is being promoted by a group of citizens and design professionals while others advocate retaining the tunnel for a possible future light rail system. We recommend that a shallow waterway be constructed in an expanded West Broad Street right-of-way, along with a much narrower Broad Street. This water feature, suggestive of the original Erie Canal, would act as a linear focal point for proposed housing developments and complementary mixed-uses while retaining the connectivity of Broad Street. Other features to be included in this area would make it an extremely viable neighborhood.



Portion of Center City Vision Plan map showing proposed Erie Canal reconstruction and new/enhanced neighborhoods.

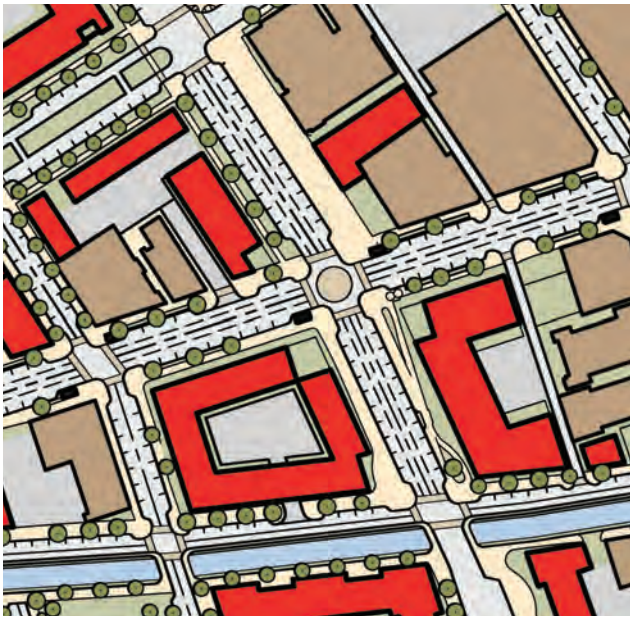
Recommendations

- Construct a 30 foot wide by 4 foot deep facsimile of the original Erie Canal within the West Broad Street corridor. Details and amenities with an historic canal theme would be incorporated. It could serve as a skating rink in winter and a water feature in the summer, with fountains at the western end and at the mid-point "widewaters;"
- Create a civic green space in the parking area north of the Jonathan Child house. The canal could be widened here, creating a "turning basin" or "widewaters;"
- Create a similar civic green space at the far western triangular end of the canal at Main and Broad Streets;
- Narrow Broad Street to two lanes with parallel parking on each side. Incorporate sidewalks, tree lawns, street trees and streetlights among other street furniture pieces. Separate the canal from the street by a 15–20 foot linear green space;
- Create a physical plan for this area with the city assuming the lead role in creating the public realm (i.e. streets, civic spaces, canal) in partnership with property owners;
- Encourage the development of mixed-use/residential buildings of appropriate design and

River Walk, San Antonio TX.

architectural excellence. On site secure parking should be provided for these buildings, preferably hidden beneath each structure. Housing should face and edge the streets and waterway, creating a continuous street wall;

- New development that occurs between Main and Broad Streets should contain residential units that face Broad Street;
- The City School District building and the Advantage Federal Credit Union building should be seriously considered for demolition in the future because their physical and architectural characteristics are negative contributors to the public realm. These sites should be occupied by buildings with an appropriately urban typology and residential uses that would help create a new mixed-use neighborhood;
- The inappropriate addition to the Jonathan Child house should be dramatically reconstructed or be replaced by a more sympathetic structure.
- The property at the Civic Center fronting Plymouth Avenue would be ideally suited for a civic/governmental use such as the proposed crime lab or City School District office.



Main Street and Plymouth Avenue plan.

Streetscape, Montreal, Quebec.

Main and Plymouth Intersection

The four quadrants of land at this intersection of two major city streets are currently used as surface parking lots. This may offer a unique opportunity to develop all four sites in an orchestrated manner, creating a powerful, exciting signature architectural focal point. Development at this intersection should be dense, include integral parking facilities, contain ground floor retail, and be primarily used for office space.

Recommendations

- The street should be designed as recommended for the Main Street corridor;
- Buildings at each corner should be truncated or "notched" to allow for a green space or plaza that would contain a large sculpture and outdoor gathering or dining space;

Proposed view of the intersection of Plymouth Avenue and Main Street.

- The buildings on the southeast and southwest corners should wrap around parking garages that could be used by building tenants and the public;
- The northeast corner site would be developed as a civic green containing a large sculpture and a complementary mural on the enfronting blank building wall;
- A fountain/water theme might also be employed at each of the four corners.

Existing conditions at Main Street and Plymouth Avenue looking east, Rochester, NY.

St. Paul and Main street

The Clarion Riverside Hotel occupies the northwest corner of Main and St. Paul Streets. The hotel's parking garage is located along the St. Paul frontage and extends almost fully to Main Street, where there is a shallow zone of retail space.

The position of the garage has a deadening affect on St. Paul, and the retail component is unsuccessful in terms of both configuration (separated from Main Street by both a wall and a level change) and architectural expression. The unfortunate effect of the existing condition is to create a shabby appearance with little actual retail enlivenment. This occurs in a location directly across from the Convention Center, where concentrations of visitors to the city can be expected and where they will be forming opinions regarding our city's image.

Recommendations

We acknowledge that the parking garage is essential to the functioning of the hotel. However we have observed that while the rooftop level of the garage extends over the retail zone, the main portion of the garage and its ramp system is held back behind it. It is therefore possible to recommend the following without significant disruption or reduction of the parking facility:

- Partial demolition of the existing two story structure at the corner, removing it back to the start of the main portion of the garage;
- Redevelopment of the resulting parcel with a new multi-story building. This building would feature more successfully integrated retail space on the ground floor, connecting directly to Main Street, and could contain office space or additional hotel space on upper floors. The architectural expression of this new structure should relate to and compliment the Granite Building located across St. Paul Street;
- Façade enhancements should be undertaken along the rest of the garage face along St. Paul Street.

St. Paul and Main Streets, Rochester, NY.

Main Street Bridge

The crossing of Main Street and the Genesee River is the literal and figurative center of downtown. Cleared in the 1960s of the buildings that once lined its north and south sides, the bridge affords views along the river corridor to the north and south. One of the more successful elements of the last Main Street reconstruction project in 1989 was the installation of railings designed by renowned artist Albert Paley along the Main Street Bridge.

The bridge is the intersection of the two major

St. Paul and Main Streets plan.

organizing elements of Downtown Rochester, and also represents the intersection of two major themes the of the design charrette (1) Main Street as a unique generator and connector of urban activity and (2) the river as natural asset to be capitalized upon with river-focused development and lined with pedestrian access.

Currently riverside pedestrian access only exists along the northwest side, leading along the First Federal building and Crossroads Park up to Andrews Street. To the northeast at the Clarion Riverside Hotel, pedestrian travel along the river north to Andrews Street is possible, but feels disengaged by the fact that it is held back from the river edge and is also a story above the water.

Conditions to the south present a stronger impediment to pedestrian routes. From the bridge looking south, the observer is standing at one edge of a well defined urban space with the Riverside Convention Center and RG&E Station 6 to the left; to the right an interesting collection of 19th century industrial structures now utilized as office and commercial space, presided over by the historic statue of Mercury on its campanile tower and the small but charming Aqueduct Park located at the water's edge; and directly in front of the viewer, the intriguing sight of the Broad Street Bridge with its small arched superstructure siting atop the Erie Canal aqueduct from 1842. However, should the observer wish to follow the draw of this scene and walk to Broad Street, he or she will find that it is currently not possible to reach Broad Street on foot without moving one block away from the river to either the east or west. The open plaza fronting the river along the Convention Center has been subject to an ever-increasing effort to block public pedestrian access, and the route south out of Aqueduct Park leads uncomfortably into the semi-private realm of the Thompson-Reuters employee parking area.

Main Street Bridge, Rochester, NY.

Recommendations

- Identify the symbolic importance of the Main Street Bridge river crossing through the installation of tall sculpture pieces marking the four corners of the bridge. Note also that while this report advocates for the creation of on-street parking opportunities along Main Street, we recommend that the Main Street Bridge be the one location where parking does not occur; in keeping with the importance of the bridge and to leave the views up and down the river unobstructed.

Develop or enhance riverside pedestrian routes from all entry points from the bridge:

- Northeast: Construction of a elevated deck, at hotel sidewalk level, sweeping out over the river to engage it more fully;
- Southwest: Construction of a pedestrian walkway supported off the face of the Thompson-Reuters buildings that would provide a route from Aqueduct Park to Broad Street. Stairs would be required to negotiate level change up to the Broad Street sidewalk, or the walkway could be incorporated into proposed redevelopment of the Aqueduct;
- Southeast: Open the Convention Center plaza to pedestrians and provide a connection to

Broad Street at the south end, either past RG&E Station 6 with a walkway structure similar to the one proposed on the southwest or passing through Station 6 as part of an interpretive redevelop-ment of that building.

Renaissance Square

The proposed Renaissance Square project promises to transform an entire superblock in the heart of Downtown. The site is bordered by Main Street, St. Paul Street, Clinton Avenue, and extends across Mortimer Street towards Pleasant Street. The concept gathers together three projects that would each be an enhancement to downtown on an individual basis:

- A transit center providing a climate controlled central transfer point for the local bus-based public transit system;
- A performing arts center;
- A new downtown campus for Monroe Community College.

The motivation to bundle these projects together is largely a practical and political one—in doing so it allows for the leveraging of public funds, specifically Federal Transit Authority dollars, that are available for joint development projects. The project budget has been fixed at $230 million dollars.

Moshe Safdie Associates (MSA) produced a detailed schematic concept for the project in 2006 that was shown to the public, but the project has been stalled until recently due to ongoing construction budget difficulty. The design concepts for the project are currently being reexamined by a joint venture of local firms with the goal of bringing the project back into budget. Given the additional new criteria of saving and incorporating the Mortimer Street parking garage, previously slated for demolition, it is certain the new design will vary from that previously shown.

Renaissance Square plan.

The project is not without its controversy and its ultimate execution is not absolutely certain. New design work is currently in progress but not yet released. This document does not make a new specific design recommendations but offers the following observations.

Observations

- The critical importance of the careful application of good architectural and urban design principals to this project may seem obvious but cannot be overstated. The nature of combining these otherwise separate projects into one makes its success unusually dependant on a very high level of design execution. An under-

Renaissance Square site, Rochester, NY.

Existing conditions at Main and Clinton Streets looking east, Rochester, NY.

standing of this point seemed to be evidenced by the act of hiring a prominent international firm like MSA. However, while that exercise did generate new community enthusiasm for the project and accomplished the significant task of bringing the transit center up to grade level, there were some aspects of those results that showed good intentions do not automatically guarantee the desired result.

- Potentially the most troubling aspect of the MSA proposal was the extent to which it focused inward and did not engage the surrounding environment, particularly with regards to on site circulation and retail activities. Any rework of the design should strive to activate its edges—especially along Main Street and Clinton Avenue.
- It should be noted that Main Street will benefit

Existing conditions at Main and Clinton Streets looking east.

greatly from the existence of a central transit center as it will be relieved of the bus transfer function. To some extent the vision of Main Street as presented in this report is dependent on the development of a transit center.

- The potential impact of this project is huge. If done well, every dollar spent on Renaissance Square will leverage an improvement of the environment throughout downtown. If not, given how many proposals are in this document to "undo" or fix projects of the past (Inner Loop, Civic Center, etc.), it is clear how much is at stake, and the importance of spending this $230 million on a design solution that works right from the start.

Four Corners Basin

The term "Four Corners" has historically been used to identify the intersection of Main Street and State/Exchange Street. As part of this study we examined the area bounded by the Genesee River, Main Street, Broad Street, and Irving Place (one block to the west of Exchange) and have identified the potential for more intensive use in this area through redevelopment.

The area is an interesting mix of mid-rise historic structures along Main Street, taller buildings at Exchange including the Wilder Building and the iconic Times Square building topped by the sculpture "Wings of Progress", and a substantial anchor of office space in the Thompson-Reuters complex, itself a long standing model of adaptive reuse. The block on the east side of Exchange is subdivided by a number of small scale streets whose names (Aqueduct, Basin, Race) reflect the historic origins of this part of the city as an important node of shipping activity along the original path of the Erie Canal. Aqueduct Park is arguably the most successful public realm greenspace along the river in downtown.

Four Corners Basin site, Rochester, NY.

Four Corners Basin site, Rochester, NY.

The vitality and character of this area is hindered however by midblock surface parking lots, undifferentiated expanses of pavement, and the vacant 1960s Central Trust building at the southeast corner of Broad and Exchange.

There is great potential to create a modern, dense, mixed-use neighborhood here at the heart of the west side of downtown, that capitalizes on the numerous historic features present, proximity to other major central business district features, and the pedestrian-scaled nature of the streets.

Recommendations

- Street reconstruction that provides on-street parking opportunities while clearly delineating

pedestrian territory;

- Demolition of the single-story portion of the Central Trust Building, a complete gut and renovation of the main portion of the building and construction of a new five story addition. This redevelopment would provide street level commercial space, 56 apartments around a courtyard, and 72 below grade parking spaces for residents.
- Construction of a new 290 space public parking garage as an infill on the lot between the Four Corners and Times Square buildings (this existing surface lot provides approximately 130 spaces in a managed/stacked configuration). This garage would be concealed by a six-story liner building facing Exchange Street that would have street level commercial space and apartments or office space above.

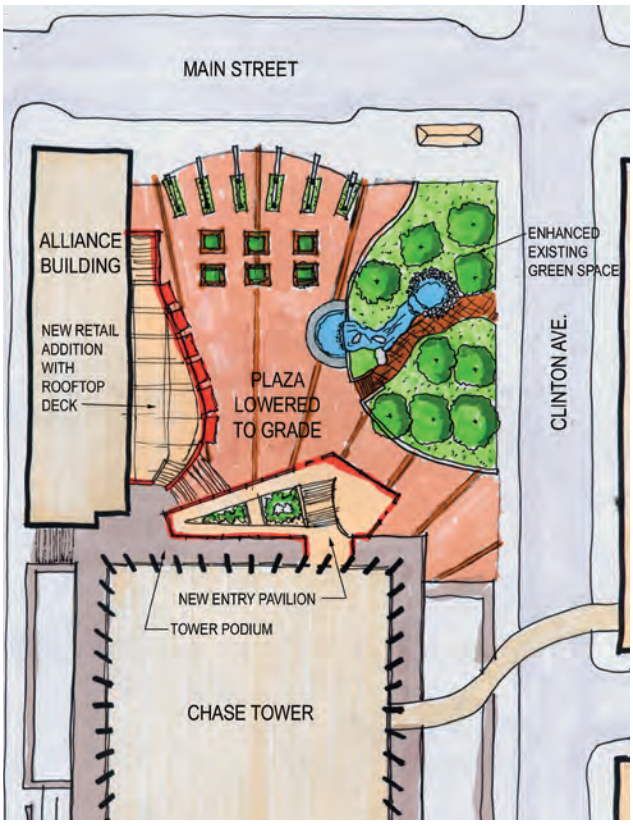
Creation of new pedestrian enhancements including:

- A new pocket park between Aqueduct and Graves Streets including a new pedestrian connection to Aqueduct Park that accommodates the level change between the two streets;
- A historic interpretive area at the Broad Street end of Aqueduct Street where a portion of the stone wall of the original canal aqueduct is visible, its geometry flaring out indicating how the canal once opened up into a loading basin at this location.

Chase Tower Plaza

The open space in front of the Chase Tower is fortuitously located at the intersection of Main and Clinton – the most prominent intersection on the east side of downtown and perhaps in all of downtown. It is an ideal location for a public realm urban space. Unfortunately in its current configuration this space is largely unused, unanimated, and divorced from the street and pedestrian activity.

Designed with a 1960s modernist design approach, the Chase Tower's sculptural (if somewhat alien) form sits atop a podium raised up from the street level. The entry plaza facing Main Street is constructed at the tower entry floor level, approximately 10 feet above the Main Street sidewalk. Below this raised plaza is a below grade concourse level intended for retail use and accessed from a bunker-like entrance at Main Street. Hidden from public view, these retail operations have largely failed. Below the concourse is a service level that has building loading docks and some private parking accessed from the below grade Cortland Street service tunnel coming from the Midtown Plaza site across the street. A green space which features a number of mature trees is located directly on the corner of Main and Clinton; public access to the green space is currently prevented by railings and fencing.



Chase Tower Plaza plan.

Recommendations

The transformation of the Chase Tower Plaza into an important, used, lively public space is most likely to be successful if it is executed in a manner that directly addresses and corrects the fundamental shortcoming of this space—its elevation above the street. One possible scenario has been depicted in this report:

- Demolition of the concourse level space and reconstruction of the plaza at grade level. It is possible for this to be done in a manner that retains the service level spaces;
- Retention of the trees and green space at the north east corner of the site. This existing park-like space would be enhanced with new features such as walking paths and a fountain, and integrated into the design of the reconstituted plaza.

Construction of two new building elements:

- A new entry pavilion for the Chase Tower that would house vertical circulation to accommodate the change of level into the Tower;
- A single story addition to the Alliance Building that would allow the expansion of retail functions into the plaza area and activate what is now a multi-story blank wall. The second floor of the Alliance Building features a large space that was originally a banking hall. The roof of the addition is proposed as a deck that would allow a use such as a restaurant to occupy that second floor space and have its activity spill out into the plaza.

Chestnut Street

The properties on either side of Chestnut Street (from Main Street to Andrews Street) between Grove Place and Liberty Pole Way define this section of Center City.

The physical characteristics of this area are somewhat similar to that of the Broad Street/Canal District in that it contains a variety of eclectic buildings of varying conditions and architectural design value. Quite different, though, is the current haphazard disconnected street pattern that has been allowed to evolve over the past several years. The consequence of this is a public realm that is uninviting to the pedestrian, creating an urban fabric that encourages automobile traffic to just pass through. Major redesign of the public realm will be required here to create vitality and value for this area.

Houses fronting a green space, Mountain View, CA.

Recommendations

- Create a new street system based upon the historic pattern whose remnants are evident and can be incorporated and enhanced. This new layout will respect, reinforce, and reinvigorate the forgotten architectural edge of several significant but depressed building groups;
- Introduce a civic green space to the redesigned urban pattern that would act as a catalyst for new mixed-use construction while invigorating the existing structures. This green would give identity and a sense of place to the area;
- Encourage the construction of dense new mixed-use/residential buildings with their own hidden secure parking;
- Construct a new public parking garage off of Stillson Street on the site of the old Stillson

Street garage. Edge the garage with a retail/ commercial liner building parallel to and facing Chestnut Street;

- All streets should be designed to promote pedestrian activity through the incorporation of street trees, tree lawns, street lights, street furniture, interesting paving, bump-outs, paved crosswalks, and as much on-street parallel parking as possible;
- Encourage the development of the Rascal site as a dense, mixed-use/residential development that strongly defines Chestnut, Main, and Gibbs Streets and harmonizes with Symphony Terrace. Provide hidden secure parking under the structure;
- An existing structure that is non-contributive to the public realm and an impediment to sustainable successful development of this area is the M&E Building. It is recommended that this building be demolished in the future to make way for more appropriate construction.

Scio Street Housing

This undeveloped and underutilized section of Scio Street between Main Street and University Avenue offers an excellent development opportunity. This area of Center City is characterized by a considerable number of scattered low density individual architecturally non-contributing one and two story

Plan of Chestnut Street and Scio Street housing.

Corn Hill Landing, Rochester, NY.

Residential development, Chicago, IL.

Charlotte Street housing. Drawing by Craig Jensen.

commercial buildings. It is recommended that the proposed construction provide a strong architectural edge to Scio Street as well as a frame edge for the Chester Dewey School.

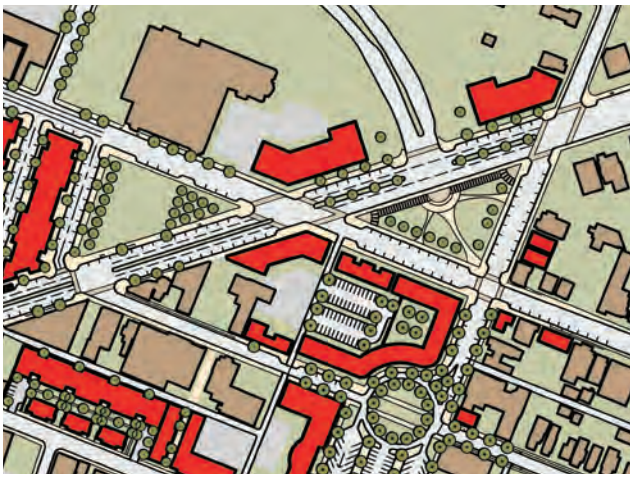
Recommendations

- Construct dense residential units on each side of Scio Street—townhouses on the west side and corridor flats on the east side. Each development would include secure, hidden, on-site parking under the Eastside building;
- Create a new civic green space in front of the Chester Dewey School as a foreground piece to both the school and residential development;
- Demolish the non-contributing low density existing structures.

Eastern Gateway

Currently there is no distinct, expressive, inspiring "gateway" into downtown from the east. Where one might occur is a tangle of paving where Main Street crosses the Inner Loop, some ill maintained open space, billboards and a large variety of non-descript one and two story commercial and residential buildings.

The character of this part of town could dramatically change with the removal of the Inner Loop in favor of an enhanced Union Street, reconnected



Eastern gateway plan.

Park with fountain, Philadelphia, PA.

University Avenue and development of the significant resulting rediscovered acreage. Presenting itself with all of these potential changes would be the opportunity of creating a major gateway experience into the eastern end of Center City.

Recommendations

- The redefining of Union Street, making University Avenue connected again, and redesigning Main Street at the area of the former Inner Loop crossing will create the potential for a grand triangular gateway civic green. It is envisioned that this space be handsomely landscaped and contain strategically placed large sculptures and a major water feature;
- As described earlier, a secondary smaller tri-

Proposed improvements to Anderson Park.

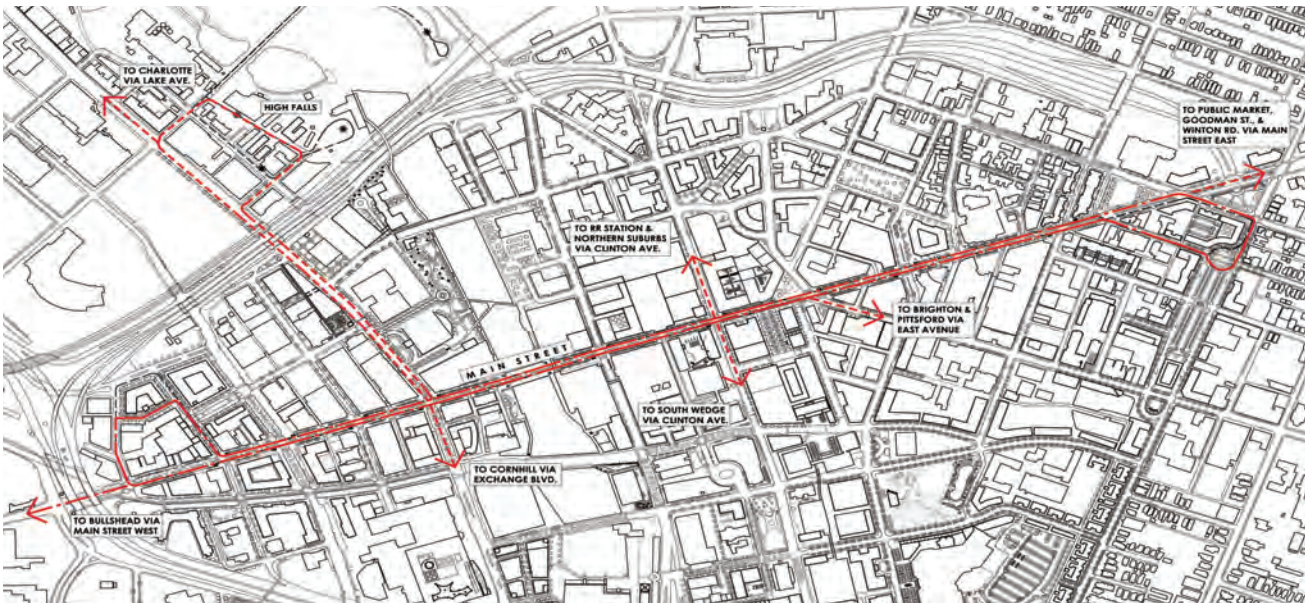
angular green would be placed in front of the Chester Dewey School;

- The three intersecting streets at this point would be designed with street trees, tree lawns, street lights, appropriate sidewalks, bump-outs, pedestrian crossings, gateway street pylon structures, etc.;
- Land would become available for the design of public realm defining dense, residential architecture to enhance the gateway quality of the urban fabric;
- The entrance to the north section of the Inner Loop would become much less dominant and would be designed to slow traffic. In time this entry point would change again when the northern section might be converted to a multi-way boulevard;
- Not only will this become a gateway into the downtown but also to several adjacent neighborhoods—the Public Market, Neighborhood of the Arts, lower East Main Street, and the new Southeast Loop neighborhood. Entry markers and signage should be placed at the appropriate points to announce these residential areas.

Main Street subway in front of the County Office Building, Rochester, NY (Albert Stone Collection).

Main Street Trolley

A central element in the vision for a rejuvenated downtown is the creation of a street car system on Main Street. The system envisioned would not be unlike the overhead electric rail trolleys that ran throughout the city in the early 1900s except that it would be a new, contemporary, state of the art installation similar to those being successfully operated currently in Europe and the United States.



Proposed trolley loop.

Streetcars are enjoying a renaissance all across the country with projects completed and under construction and new lines being evaluated and planned in many US cities. Places like Portland, Tampa, Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia, Little Rock, and Memphis are enjoying the economic development benefits of their trolley systems—even the small city of Kenosha, Wisconsin, operates a trolley line, clearly suggesting that one in Rochester is within the realm of feasibility.

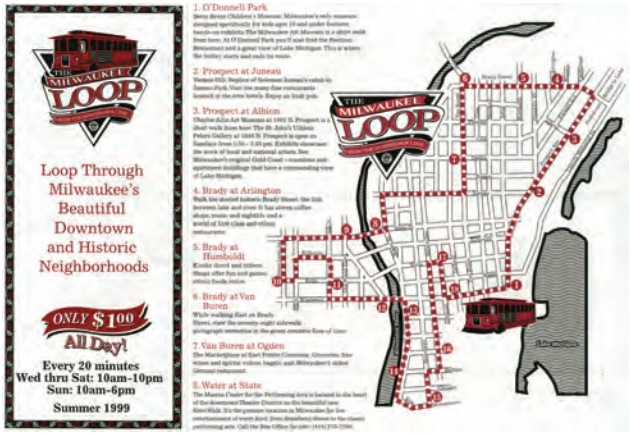
If Rochester intends to become a competitive 21st century city, it will need to seriously consider light rail transit in its revitalization efforts with a streetcar system as just one of the components. Planning for the future should also include light rail vehicles running on their own dedicated rights of way to areas such as Charlotte, RIT, and the outlying suburbs. Another transit mode, commuter rail, using heavier railroad-grade cars might also be considered.

For the immediate future, though, the simple beginning of a streetcar layout on Main Street could be a huge catalytic benefit for sustainable economic development in the downtown. At the east and west end loops (Southeast Loop and Cascade District) the proposed trolley would attract more interest for dense residential development along with new parking structures. At the nodes along the trolley route there would be increased commercial incentives and activity. A trolley system will make downtown Rochester more pedestrian friendly and will greatly increase connectivity between venues, offices, downtown residences, and retail across the entire width of Center City. The lines could be extended in the future to High Falls, East End, Bulls Head (via the Susan B. Anthony area), Public Market, Amtrak Station, Corn Hill, University of Rochester, etc.

The addition of a trolley system would begin a new era for Rochester. The system itself would initially be a tourist and regional attraction helping to increase downtown vitality. As ridership increased due to rising gas prices and accelerated downtown residential development, the system would help replace automobile usage. The clean, green character of the system would help improve air quality. Eventually, as the system grew to outlying destinations, all of the benefits stated above would dramatically increase the economic fortunes of downtown as well as of the city and region.

According to the Reconnecting America publication Street Smart there are over 300 cities across the globe that have working light rail transit service. There are over 80 cities in the US alone that are either operating, planning for, or exploring the possibility of a trolley or LRT system. Again, for Rochester to be a first class, world class city, it needs to begin exploring a system for itself. ▲

Trolley, Memphis, TN.



Trolley route, Milwaukee, WI.

Focus Area Five

River South

DISCUSSION

The River South focus area is encompassed by Main Street to the north, the Frederick Douglass - Susan B. Anthony Bridge to the south, South Clinton Avenue to the east, and Exchange Boulevard to the west. The northern portion of the area is densely developed with mid and high-rise office buildings, and mid-rise civic and cultural buildings while the southern portion has low to-mid-rise late-19th and early-20th century former manufacturing buildings. The Genesee River runs through the center of the focus area. It is crossed by four thoroughfares: Main Street, Broad Street, Court Street, and I-490 (via the Douglass - Anthony Bridge).

The Genesee River was once the center of the city's industry but is now used principally for recreation and tourism with guided boat tours, crew racing, and laser light shows projected on the gorge at High Falls. Many of the manufacturing and industrial buildings along its banks were razed during the Urban Renewal campaign of the mid-20th century; however several of these structures remain in the River South Focus Area and are valuable historic fabric that links us to our industrious past. Examples include the Broad Street Aqueduct (bridge), the Court-Exchange Building and Thompson-Reuters complex on the west side, the former Lehigh Valley Railroad Station, and the former naval armory, now home to the Geva Theatre, on the east side. Also historically significant is the Rundel Memorial Library Building, completed in 1936 on the east bank of the river in

Observation

Large surface parking lots, while seemingly in short supply, are actually a liability, hindering the development of valuable land into its highest and best use. Many of the manufacturing and industrial buildings along the perimeter of the Genesee River were razed during the Urban Renewal campaign of the mid-20th Century. However, several of these structures remain in the River South area and are valuable fabric that links us to our industrious past.

Recommendations

Large surface parking lots would be eliminated in favor of mid and high-rise mixed-use buildings wrapping multi-level parking structures. This will accommodate the need for high density housing, provide commercial space for expanded cultural venues and neighborhood services, and conceal a utilitarian parking structure, while significantly increasing the number of parking spaces in the district. By using the original, existing historic context of the River South Focus Area, (i.e. the Genesee River, Broad Street Aqueduct, century-old warehouses) a vibrant urban village can be created that contributes to the cultural, residential, and recreational uses of the Center City.

Existing surface parking surrounding Geva Theatre adjacent to Washington Square Park, Rochester, NY.

the Art Deco and Beaux Arts styles. The grouping of brick warehouses along South Avenue south of Woodbury Boulevard, although not designated as historic landmarks, are fine examples of vernacular architecture from the turn of the 20th century.

The Frederick Law Olmstead-designed Washington Square Park is an historic asset to the River South Focus Area. It serves as the southern gateway into downtown and is flanked by two historic places of worship, St. Mary's Church and the First Universalist Church. Originally edged with low-rise buildings, over the last forty years mid and high-rise office towers have been constructed around the park which constitute the most valuable real estate in the metropolitan area.

Key destinations in the focus area today include: Geva Theatre, which attracts over 170,000 patrons annually for a variety of shows from musicals to American and world classics; Dinosaur Bar-B-Que, occupying the former Lehigh Valley Railroad Station; Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial, which hosts professional hockey and lacrosse teams, as well as musical concerts and nationally touring events; and the Rundel Memorial and Bausch & Lomb Public Library Buildings, popular destinations for casual reading, research, and lectures.

Existing conditions along South Avenue, Rochester, NY.

CHALLENGES

- Most riverfront development in the past turned its back on the river, rather than embrace it. More recent demolition has left large areas on the riverfront vacant or underutilized;
- Valuable riverfront property is tied up with utility easements and right-of-ways on the west bank making appropriate development more difficult and complex;
- Elevated expressway ramps on the east bank hinder access to the riverfront;
- The South Wedge, a vibrant historic neighborhood to the south, is cut off from downtown by the I-490 expressway and associated ramps;
- The creation of a continuous riverfront walk is made more difficult by these factors and by some buildings that directly abut the river;
- Large surface parking lots are either privately owned or under long-term lease by the city, hampering their conversion to better uses;
- One-way street configurations are confusing to motorists and difficult for pedestrians to safely cross;
- Due to the city's industrial past, vacant or underutilized land in the River South Focus Area may have environmental issues yet to be discovered and remediated;

The existing I-490 ramp at South Avenue, Rochester, NY.

- The Civic Center and its plaza on Exchange Boulevard are examples of failed urban design concepts popular in the mid-20th century. The fine grained network of streets and blocks and many historic buildings (really a portion of the old Corn Hill neighborhood) were replaced by a series of monolithic buildings surrounding a vast elevated concrete plaza. People have never been attracted to the plaza for a long list of reasons. Humanizing and bringing life to the plaza is a daunting challenge.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Eliminating one-way streets and adding on-street parking throughout the Center City would contribute to more navigable streets, calm traffic, and make storefront businesses more viable;
- Surface parking lots present opportunities to convert these large, underutilized properties into mid and high-rise mixed-use buildings that may include multi-level parking decks;
- Capitalizing on the city's history is a significant opportunity. A study is being conducted by the City of Rochester to investigate the options available for the redevelopment of the Broad Street Aqueduct and its adjacent tunnel. Re-investing in our historic resources, such as converting the Aqueduct into a tourist destination, or perhaps re-watering the Erie Canal through its original location, could be a boon for the River South Focus Area by improving the quality of the public realm;
- There are also opportunities for the hundred-year-old warehouse buildings to be renovated into a mixed-use village with a significant residential component, contributing to a vibrant street life beyond the current 9-to-5 weekday traffic.

The ideas explored by the River South team include: Increase high-density residential develop-

South Avenue garage site with existing helix ramp demolition in progress, Rochester, NY.

ment, create a waterfront cultural destination, eliminate underutilized and vacant land, increase pedestrian access and connections, increase mixed-use development, and mitigate the impact of the Inner Loop.

During the design charrette, City of Rochester Engineer Tom Hack gave an overview of recent and proposed city-involved projects in the Area. The team was careful not to preclude these projects from working with our concept master plan, and chose to develop ideas that have not yet been presented.

SITES FOR INTERVENTION

South Avenue Garage Site

The South Avenue Garage site is the former location of the helix ramp that was demolished after its structural collapse in 2006. This quarter-acre site fronts on a prominent intersection in the Tower District. Many cultural and entertainment amenities are within walking distance.

Recommendations

Construct a nineteen story high-rise with commercial space on the first two floors, and residential units above to address the need for more high-density, mixed-use residential development. This slender tower would be a visible addition to the city's skyline.

- Provide a commercial space large enough to accommodate an urban grocery store or national retail tenant;
- Locate off-street parking in the existing attached garage;
- Change Broad Street to accommodate two-way traffic with on-street parking provided on both sides;
- Across Broad Street, construct a monumental stair down to a redeveloped Aqueduct to provide a pedestrian connection between the aqueduct and the street.

Proposed 100 South mixed-use high rise at Broad Street, with additional parking spaces and sidewalk beautifications.

Washington Square Village

Two blocks south of the garage site, the team proposes the development of Washington Square Village, a dense, mixed-use urban neighborhood. The existing warehouse buildings in the district would be renovated for residential use on the upper floors, with commercial space at street level. The character of these historic structures would complement the contemporary design of the proposed infill buildings. This contrast of old and new will contribute to the energy and vitality of this urban village.

Recommendations:

- Maintain the current curb-to-curb width of Woodbury Boulevard but introduce a landscaped median and bump-outs to improve pedestrian connections and calm traffic. On-street parking would be provided along its length on both sides. This design would provide one traffic lane in each direction. The median would run from South Clinton Avenue to South Avenue. The street design would transition to the design for Woodbury Boulevard proposed in the Southeast Loop Focus Area;
- Replace the surface parking lot adjacent to Geva Theatre with a sixteen story mixed-use

Washington Square Village.

Existing conditions along South Avenue looking northeast at I-490 interchange at the site of the Washington Square Village development, Rochester, NY.

tower, the "Theatre Lofts". This high rise would complete the square of buildings surrounding historic Washington Square Park, while affording its residents park and river views. The proportions of the tower's base are compatible with the existing flanking buildings along Woodbury. Parking would be included on the lower levels;

- Replace the large surface parking lot south of Capron Street with a multi-level parking structure wrapped by mixed-use buildings. This will accommodate the need for high-density housing, provide commercial space for expanded cultural venues and neighborhood services, while significantly increasing the number of parking spaces in the district;
- Remove the circular ramp from the Inner Loop to South Clinton Avenue to accommodate the parking structure mentioned above. Study ways to improve pedestrian connections to the South Wedge neighborhood across the formidable I-490 barrier;

Mixed-used development proposed at South Avenue.

- Develop 244 and 250 South Avenue as mixed-use buildings with commercial space on the first floors, residential units above, and on-site parking. Located at the terminus of South Avenue, these sites are highly visible from I-490, which will help these buildings to serve as an advertisement for city living;
- Connect Woodbury Boulevard to the west side of the Genesee River. Provide walkways across South Avenue leading to a waterfront cultural destination, the "Erie Canal Interpretive Park", from which visitors can experience the canal's original location. Construct a pedestrian bridge

Existing conditions at site of proposed Theatre Lofts mixed-use tower along Woodbury Boulevard, Rochester, NY.

Proposed Theatre Lofts mixed-use tower on Woodbury Boulevard.

running parallel to the Court Street Dam, connecting the river's east and west banks. By using the original historic context of the area, a vibrant urban village can be created that contributes cultural, residential, and recreational uses to Center City.

West Bank of the Genesee River South of Court Street

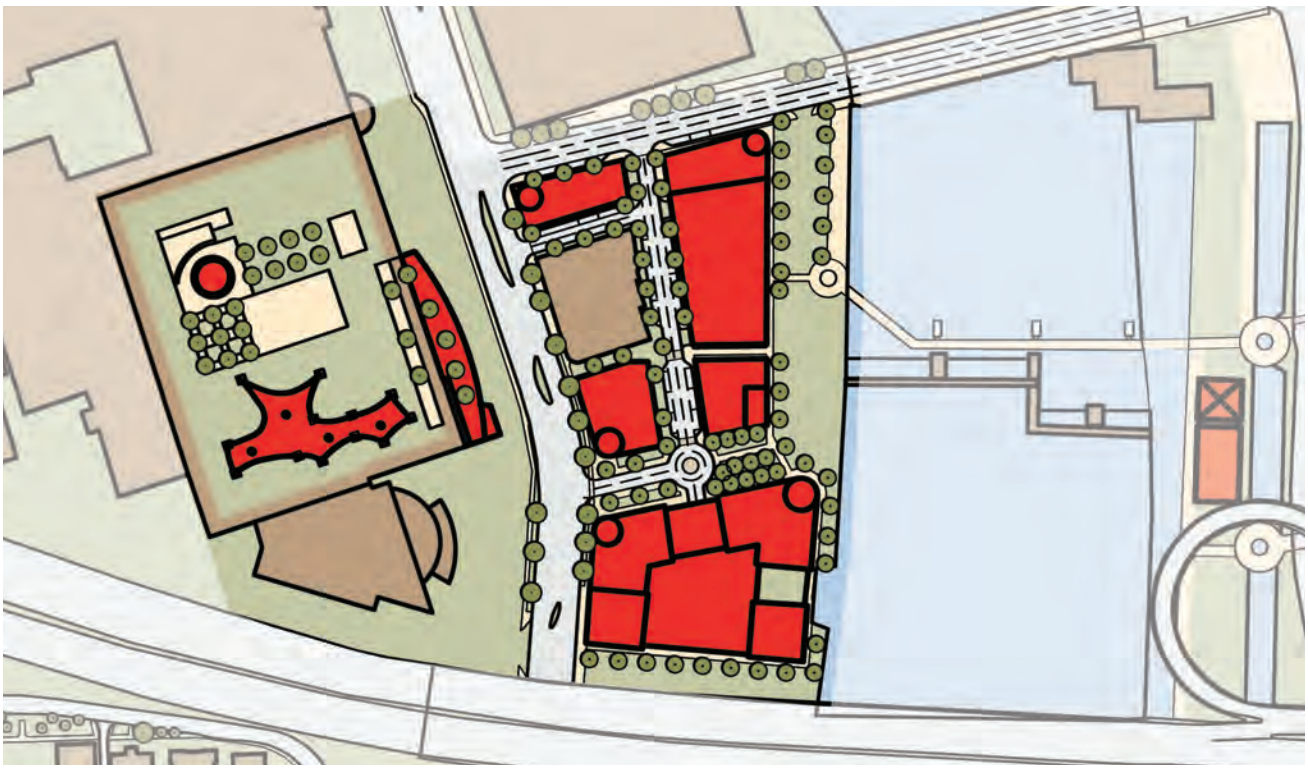
The west bank of the river, south of Court Street, currently consists of a large surface parking lot enfronting the river, Exchange Boulevard and Court Street, interrupted only by the century-old Court-Exchange Building.

Recommendations

- Break up the block with new pedestrian-scaled streets;
- Construct five new mid-rise, mixed-use buildings built up to the sidewalks of the new streets;
- Utilize the two larger buildings to wrap multi-level parking structures that accommodate the need for parking in the district. The upper floors of the new buildings would include residential units. Views from Woodbury Boulevard across the river to the City Public Safety Building would be framed by this new development on the west bank.

Civic Center Plaza

The Civic Center Plaza is elevated above street level, mostly hidden by an unfinished wall along Exchange Boulevard, accessible only by a deteriorated exterior stair or through the more recently constructed circular entrance pavilion. It is an entirely paved surface lacking any trees or other sources of shade or greenery. The buildings surrounding the plaza are all devoted to single uses related to the criminal justice system, thus providing little reason for visitors to frequent this bleak space.



Mixed-use development proposal for the west bank of the Genesee River south of Court Street.

Recommendations

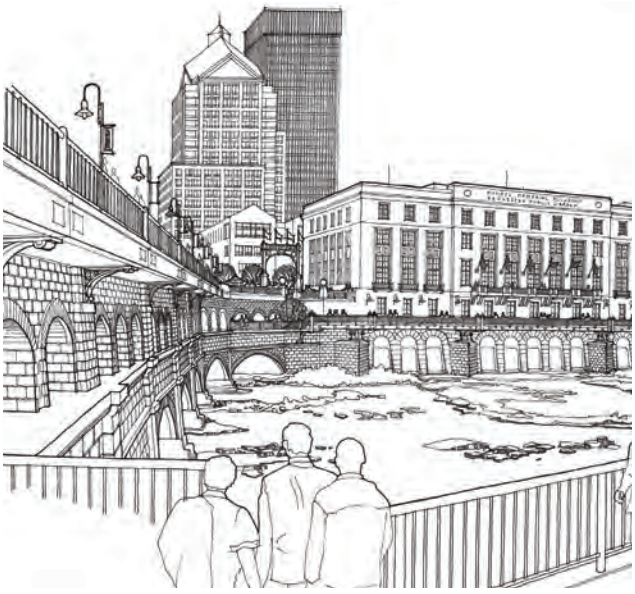
- Create a more gracious, easy to use transition from street level to plaza level through the construction of a gentle ramp that replaces the wall with a discernible path to the plaza;
- Introduce tensile fabric structures to break the plaza down into discreet, more humanly scaled spaces that provide shade and shelter for possible new uses for the plaza;
- Introduce public art to the plaza;
- Provide new signage and an identity program to promote use of the plaza;
- Introduce programmed activities to the plaza to provide people with reasons to visit and use the space.

Both sides of the Riverfront

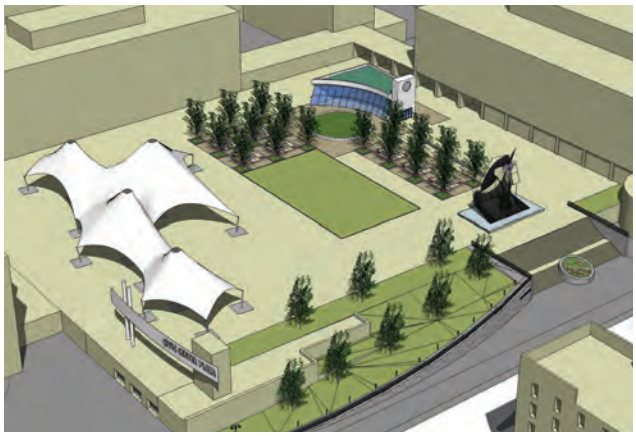
Both sides of the river are currently lacking continuous pedestrian connections to adjacent areas to the north and south. Physical barriers in certain locations will require major efforts to overcome.

Recommendations

- Create continuous pedestrian walkways on both sides of the river. This will require bridges or cantilevered walkways in front of the Rundel Library and the Thompson-Reuters Publishing building;
- Provide pedestrian connections from the river walks to the street level and the aqueduct level at the Broad Street Bridge;
- Require the Riverside Convention Center to open its river frontage to the public as part of the river walk system.



Proposed riverwalk development.



Proposed redevelopment of the Civic Center Plaza.

Conclusion

A framework exists in the River South Focus Area which can be utilized and added to, significantly enhancing the public realm, and increasing the quality of life in Center City. As the streets, sidewalks, recreational and civic spaces are addressed so that their full potential is achieved, so is the opportunity for the careful renovation of historic warehouses into a mix of uses, and the elimination of large surface lots to accommodate denser development. Rochester is fortunate to have a downtown with significant historic building stock, beautiful natural assets, and a manageable, walkable scale that enables pedestrians to navigate it with ease. As we build upon this important framework, we can create a vibrant, mixed-use Center City which will be a sought after place to live, visit, and work. ▲

Recommendations Summary

CREATE CENTER CITY TASK FORCE

- A self-formed group of business, civic, and community leaders to promote ideas for the redevelopment effort in the downtown;
- Will provide support, expertise, and guidance, and be an advocate, for efforts identified as critical to the implementation of the initiatives outlined in the Downtown Charrette Summary;
- Would assist in engaging experts from the local design and development community to inform project planning and implementation;
- Members of the task force would include representatives from a range of stakeholder groups, organizations, institutions and individuals.

ADOPT COORDINATED AND UPDATED DOWNTOWN PLAN

- Revise current Center City Plan (adopted by City Council in 2004) combining elements of the Center City Plan, outcomes of 2007 Downtown Charrette and other selected planning efforts;
- Goal would be a unified and coordinated approach to redevelopment;
- Resulting physical vision plan would reflect strategies for intervention and serve as a basis for a strategic, phased action plan for development in the downtown;
- The official updated Center City Plan would be approved by City Council; visible and accessible; and used to guide future decisions regarding downtown development.

CONSIDER MODELS FOR AN ENTITY TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS

- Task force would play a key role in evaluating ideas and information related to various development organization models from around the country (profit and not for profit) to assess their potential relevance for the formation of an entity focused exclusively on the downtown;
- This entity might be formed from an existing organization, such as the Cultural Commission or the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), restructured to accommodate this new role;
- Important functions would include making sites available for development; securing property and land critical to the implementation of plans; and providing oversight and support for goals related to quality of design and appropriateness of projects;
- Funding for projects to stimulate development and investment from private sector could be secured by this entity which would be empowered to leverage seed money from local banks and foundations.

DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT

Business Improvement District

- A Business Improvement District (BID), or similar mechanism, is needed in the downtown to provide for an attractive public realm;
- A management program would implement an enhanced level of maintenance on a regular basis; monitor cleanliness, upkeep repair and refurbishment of public realm;
- Public safety would be a major focus as well as year round programing in parks, plazas, and other public spaces, making them a destination for residents and visitors;
- The BID would be involved with critical marketing activities supporting economic development and advocating for urban living and public safety initiatives.

River Corridor Commission

- A River Corridor Commission would oversee development of physical and programmatic planning for the area along the Genesee River;
- The Commission would be charged with advocating for and marketing this precious regional asset, finding ways to encourage its use by the

region's citizens and encouraging tourism;
- The Commission would spearhead the development and adoption of a strategic action plan for development of the river corridor;
- A strategic physical plan would provide for continuous public access to the river corridor along its entire length on both sides with connections to neighborhoods and districts contiguous to the downtown;
- The strategic action plan would be phased and well-publicized, creating visible improvements including the construction of a River Walk;
- The Commission would develop ideas to encourage use of the river corridor and its environs for public celebrations and events.

INNOVATIVE FUNDING AND FINANCING

Financing Methods and Development Incentives

- Research development methods used successfully by other cities, identifying potential legal or bureaucratic roadblocks;
- A committee or task force could potentially provide solutions and garner support for changes and reforms to unlock financing methods including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Conversion Urban Exemption (CUE);
- Explore development incentives including priority and retail zones. Assess options for tax structures that encourage improvement of underutilized property, vacant lots, and areas of surface parking.

TARGET PUBLICLY CONTROLLED SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Concentrate effort on the development for the eight remaining publicly controlled downtown sites;
- Such development should have a catalytic effect;
- Provide technical assistance for streamlining the process for expediting approvals necessary to implement projects;
- Connect sites, where possible, with public realm and infrastructure improvements.

ADOPT DESIGN STANDARDS

- Ensure development in the downtown contributes toward the improvement of the public realm and the public good;
- Help design a more effective code with more mandatory standards;
- Give the Project Review Committee (PRC) more official authority over design;
- Re-evaluate current design guidelines to rework and simplify.

IDENTIFY SIGNATURE PROJECTS

- Removal of Inner Loop;
- Construction of strategically located small parking garages;
- Entertainment/retail site featuring an IMAX theater and urban anchor store such as Crate & Barrel in combination with smaller retail stores;
- Phased construction of River Walk;
- Creation of downtown circulators;
- Urban grocery store such as Trader Joe's bundled with smaller retail;
- Construction of mid-sized performance theater/conference center dovetailing with Convention Center functions;
- New multi-modal transportation station.

IMMEDIATE AND SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS

- Increase parking spaces on streets where possible;
- Install wayfinding system;
- Pedestrian scale street enhancements (i.e. lighting, banners, awnings), targeting Main Street;
- Establish family attractions (i.e. restaurants, entertainment, retail, recreation);
- Create priority zones to encourage retail development and physical improvements. ▲

Summary and Conclusions

Today, with housing leading the way as a catalyst for development, downtown Rochester is at a critical juncture with an opportunity to reestablish itself as the viable center for the region. There is a resurgence of investment and growth in the downtown after decades of decline in population and the movement of business, commerce and services to the suburbs and surrounding region. We have reason to be hopeful given current demographic trends, particularly with a renewed interest in urban lifestyle and the resulting demand for housing, especially among population groups characterized as "GenXers", "Empty Nesters" and those who want to take advantage of the amenities that downtowns offer. Consistent with these trends are new opportunities to grow our tax base in Center City, which is likely to become more economically competitive as we move into an era of increasingly expensive energy, making dense, walkable communities more attractive.

Capitalizing on these opportunities will require meaningful partnerships, economic incentives and a renewed focus on the condition of the infrastructure and public realm in the downtown. As private investors fuel development, government, along with professional and advisory planning organizations will need to serve as a guiding force for an approach to planned, targeted improvements and thoughtful policies that foster a predictable climate for redevelopment. To that end, these organizations will need to play a key role in creating strategies to spur economic vitality, taking advantage of Center City as a destination and encouraging beneficial partnerships and collaboration.

Following the example of positive revitalization outcomes in both Chattanooga and Providence, cities that were not long ago in decline, Rochester will need to make infrastructure improvements and provide amenities that complement current and future redevelopment. This includes enhancing the streets and public spaces around which private sector projects are being implemented. We also need to provide for the management, maintenance and programming of Main Street and downtown spaces. Downtown has finite boundaries, requiring careful assessment of each and every proposed project, making sure that the potential for every site for development be carefully considered. Appropriate density, quality of design, and the potential contribution of each project to the overall context of the downtown will be important goals of an agreed upon framework to which downtown projects conform.

Engage Citizens

To be competitive in attracting and retaining residents and businesses, we will need to build on our positive assets, including our valuable stock of historic architecture, and our wonderful natural resource, the Genesee River. It is clear that we will need to work collaboratively, providing guidelines and incentives to encourage and achieve quality design and appropriate development. A key to the vision for a community is the investment, support, input, and involvement of Rochester's citizens. The cities that have revitalized most successfully have engaged the citizens from their regions and included their ideas as an integral part of the visioning process.

Residents and stakeholders participating in a charrette event, Rochester, NY.

Create Center City Task Force

Redevelopment in Rochester's downtown will require leadership from a variety of business, civic, and community leaders who come forward, engage and help to guide a collaborative unified process to address planned improvements and management of public spaces. Pulling from our existing skilled and knowledgeable stakeholder base, we recommend that a Center City Task Force be formed to provide needed expertise and support and to serve as an advisory unit, uniquely equipped to weigh in and give advice about proposed ideas, processes and projects for the downtown. The task force would help spearhead a series of actions needed to move downtown development forward in a coordinated, creative and pragmatic manner.

The task force would support redevelopment carried out in concert with an official plan such as an amended Center City Plan, implemented according to an agreed upon, codified set of self-imposed constraints that are reasonable, protective and based on high quality urban design principles consistent with those established in the 2007 Downtown Charrette. Providing leadership and expertise, the focus group would ensure that redevelopment enhances the city's ability to attract future investment and that it be orchestrated according to an agreed upon overall vision celebrating the downtown and its unique sense of place. The functions of the task force would include, but not be limited to:

- Advocating for the adoption of an official plan;
- Reviewing information and providing advice about existing and potential processes, systems, and legislative or regulatory controls that effect the redevelopment of the downtown;
- Exploring ideas about creative financing and funding mechanisms for investment and development;
- Examining models of entities and multi-disciplinary teams that are operating successfully in other cities, planning for and overseeing aspects of downtown development, and whose structure might be duplicated in some form to focus on development and maintenance of public spaces in Rochester's downtown.
- Initiate and participate with other community leaders in trips to communities that have engaged in successful revitalization efforts or support bringing experts from other areas to Rochester to inform our process.

The High Falls of the Genesee River in downtown Rochester, NY.

As part of a strategic planning effort that would yield an Action Plan, volunteers with specific skills and experience might be enlisted by the task force and its partners to serve on subcommittees created to explore certain issues or ideas in depth. Subcommittees could be formed to focus on issues and ideas related to downtown revitalization and redevelopment, helping to identify strategic priorities around topics such as infrastructure, urban design, transportation, economic opportunity, public safety and quality of life.

Adopt a Coordinated and Updated Center City Vision Plan

The current Center City Plan, adopted by City Council as the official plan in 2004, although effective

in many ways, especially as a very general overall concept plan, falls short as a true detailed physical vision plan. Combining the appropriate elements from the Center City Plan, the 2007 Downtown Charrette and selected previous planning efforts, the opportunity exists to create a unified approach for the redevelopment of downtown Rochester. This process would involve the city's Bureau of Planning and Departments of Economic and Community Development in concert with RRCDC, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), the Downtown Charrette Steering Committee, and other groups, individuals or organizations that could serve as a resource and provide technical assistance. The Amended Center City Vision Plan, which would be ultimately approved by City Council, would be visible and accessible, downloadable from the City's website, distributed using CD's, and prominently placed on the walls in City Hall and included in presentations to a wide variety of municipal, professional, and citizen groups in the region. It should be a living document, used to guide all future decisions regarding downtown development and be updated in a systematic manner.

Consider Models for an Entity to Implement Downtown Projects

Given the special character and quality of Rochester's downtown, we recommend the formation of a development entity that would focus solely on Center City, supporting its revitalization through joint partnerships and investments in infrastructure. This entity would work as part of a multi-disciplinary team. The Center City Task Force would be given information about how various entities are operating in other cities around the country and be charged with recommending a model that might make sense for Rochester. Recommendations might be to restructure an existing group such as RDDC or the Cultural Commission, which could assist the city, county, and the private sector in initiating economic development strategies, capital projects and the creation of great public spaces in the downtown.

This entity, which could function as a non-profit developer working in concert with the development community and the city, would have the capacity to implement projects in a timely fashion, and could be instrumental in securing or reorganizing property, including land critical to the implementation of plans. Functioning with an agreed upon vision based on strategies delineated in the Center City Vision Plan, this entity would assist in making sites available for development, provide oversight and support goals related to the quality, design and appropriateness of projects. It would be empowered to leverage seed money from local banks and foundations for projects that would stimulate development and investment from the private sector. Potentially, this entity could assist in providing project costs for restoration of historic building façades, with affordable housing projects and for some public improvements including landscaping, lighting and infrastructure.

Manage Downtown

Downtown Rochester lacks an agency or group to provide an enhanced level of services and implement strategies for marketing and management. The ULI report recommended that a Business

Downtown Rochester streetscape mixing historic and contemporary architecture.

Improvement District (BID) be established and suggested that RDDC be reconstituted to play this role. BIDs are typically financed with voluntary payments by property owners in the form of increased property taxes, usually between 5 and 10 percent of assessed valuation. There are over 1,200 BIDs in the US and Canada and they are generally recognized as a prerequisite for the successful redevelopment of traditional downtowns.

Typical functions of management programs operating in communities around the country include:

- Improved levels of cleanliness and maintenance of streets, sidewalks and public spaces, providing an enhanced level of upkeep including additional trash receptacles, continuous litter pickup, sidewalk snow removal, street and sidewalk cleaning, plantings and maintenance of landscaping in public spaces;
- Improved levels of safety using roving "ambassadors" who can report problems to police via their radio system and help visitors with directions and advice. The RDDC already has a program that fulfills this function to some degree;
- The creation and management of year round programming in parks, plazas and other public spaces to provide attractions, making them a destination for residents and visitors;

BIDs can help establish streetscape beautification measures such as planting flowers.

- Recruiting retail and other businesses to fill voids in the market and help activate streets;
- Marketing downtowns as exciting destinations.

Some have taken over parking management including such items as development of a parking strategy, provision of directional signage, a common validation system, encouraging shared parking and even construction of new parking facilities. Others have participated in real estate development and in coordination with development entities engaged in the following:

- Land assembly for new development;
- Providing "gap financing" for new projects or redevelopment to enable these projects to proceed;
- Joint venturing with private developers;
- Initiating pilot projects to demonstrate the market for such developments. This may be a way to jumpstart important destination projects such as a grocery store, a major retailer (i.e. Crate & Barrel) or an IMAX theater.

The City of Rochester is near its constitutional taxing limit, which makes the typical financing mechanism for a BID nearly impossible. Alternatives for us might lie in models found for management organizations that are not traditional BIDs operating in other cities. Some cities, like Houston, have formed special management districts operated under the direction of a board of directors that focus on leveraging public funds with private resources to improve facilities and services while expeditiously promoting improvements in a level beyond what local government or voluntary efforts can do. Management districts levy an assessment based on the value of improvements and deemed to be a "benefit tax" as opposed to a property tax. Fifty percent or more of the property owners in the district must approve. The Houston Downtown Management District (HDMD) has established the Retail Incentives Grant Program to promote local

economic development, particularly in the Main Street corridor. Programs like this can be very important in stimulating development of retail by providing tenant improvement subsidies as an incentive for retailers to locate downtown.

To be effective, management districts must reach out to all downtown stakeholders and citizens of the city and region to build public support for downtown until it reaches a critical mass of development. Programs overseen through such district include, business development, planning, capital projects and construction, and marketing, communications, and operations. The operations component oversees street teams that clean sidewalks and maintain landscaping on the Main Street and other downtown streets and spaces. In Houston, the police department works closely with HDMD on issues of public safety, an effort that could certainly be duplicated in Rochester.

A management agency could be included as an operational component of a non-profit development corporation focused on projects and initiatives in the downtown. The need for an entity to perform the management duties, typically carried out in the BID structure, is so critical that a viable financing mechanism must be identified and options explored for revenue streams, other than property taxes, to fund this important function.

Rochester might consider the creation of a Downtown Management District which could levy a management assessment fee, deemed to be a "benefit tax" not a property tax. Creation of a petition-based improvement district would require the approval of 50 percent of property owners. Funds secured would provide for upkeep, maintenance and repair of streets and spaces within the district as well as management and programming of these areas. Special programs such as beautification and retail incentive grants for improvements made to property could be offered to provide economic incentives for businesses to locate in the district.

River Corridor Commission

A strategic action plan for the river corridor is needed to address the unique character and conditions related to public access and project implementation along the Genesee River. Developing and leveraging this incredible natural resource, effectively connecting it to existing and planned trails, should be an important goal. A special commission would be charged with the work of refining and adopting a plan that provides continuous public access to the entire length of the river corridor on both sides and connects to the neighborhoods and districts both in and contiguous to the downtown. The strategic action plan would be phased and well publicized and include visible improvements and progress. In addition to projects and improvements, the commission would develop ideas to encourage the use of the river corridor and its environs for public celebrations and events and would be charged with advocating for and marketing this precious regional asset.

Innovative Funding and Financing

Communities around the country are utilizing a variety of creative funding resources to provide support for staff and facilities for management,

A River Corridor Commission could help Rochester celebrate more fully its connection to the Genesee River.

development entities, and to pay for projects and improvements. In cities like Chattanooga, Houston, Albuquerque and St. Paul, foundation funding has been used to leverage private and public dollars to help create multi-disciplinary partner organizations, including design centers and development corporations, to spearhead redevelopment activities. In some places, like Asheville, North Carolina, philanthropic developers have provided funds for the purchase and redevelopment of buildings and provided support for local businesses to fill the street level floors in strategically located sections of the downtown. We may look to "mission-related" investments where projects carry a double or triple bottom line with project goals creating benefits for the environment and sustainability and/or carrying socially motivated goals adding value to the community. Where community revitalization is the motivator, philanthropic donors may agree to be repaid over a longer period of time to fund certain projects and pension and foundation monies might be used creatively.

To jump start development in sections of the downtown that have been slower to activate we should employ Tax Incentive Funding (TIF). We might look at creating reinvestment zones that support and attract private investment around the central business core that, by their development, will strengthen and provide stability in a matrix of development. Financial incentives can be created in tax increment reinvestment zones created to foster public-private partnerships that enable the construction and installation of public realm streets, lighting, parks, sewer utilities among other to enhance areas adjacent to private development.

The South Avenue Garage site being prepared for redevelopment, Rochester, NY.

Preparation of Development Sites

Concerted effort should be made to set the stage for redevelopment in the downtown where necessary. Land restructuring, which might involve reconfiguration and infrastructure improvements where sites are not set up for development, should be implemented where needed. In some cases, buildings or structures might need to be removed and environmental contamination mitigated. Other impediments such as paving the way to purchasing land(s) and creating total packages for development should be expedited to encourage activity throughout the downtown in a balanced coordinated manner. This work could be carried out by the downtown development entity that is put into operation.

Target Publicly Controlled Sites for Development

There are eleven publicly controlled sites in the downtown; three have been spoken for and eight remain. A concerted effort should be made to develop the remaining eight sites by providing the technical assistance and approvals necessary to implement projects as soon as possible. Identifying these sites as priority zones, utilizing information from the charrette to determine project goals, and setting the stage so that development projects will have a catalytic effect should be important considerations in this effort. Connecting these sites where it makes sense, with public realm and infrastructure improvements should be a central goal.

Identify Signature Projects

Several important and significant projects should be identified and carried out in earnest. Removal of the Inner Loop on the city's southeast side would create over 33 acres of developable property and allow the original streets that were severed to create this roadway be reconnected to reknit the contiguous neighborhoods to the downtown. Recaptured acreage could accommodate critically needed areas for parking, commercial and residential development.

Adopting a strategy to reduce the number of surface parking lots and provide smaller garages in both public and private sector projects would encourage better use of existing land resources and encourage higher quality development. Incentives could be established to encourage developers to provide concealed parking as a component of their projects. A garage constructed behind City Hall on Fitzhugh Street to create a multi level parking facility serving the needs of the civic and private properties in the immediate area and freeing up the corner surface lot at Church and State Streets for use as civic park space would serve as an example and catalyst for similar projects throughout the downtown.

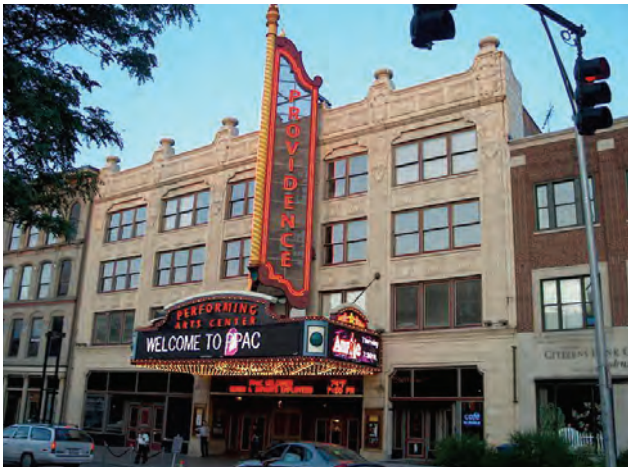
We need a special downtown project, perhaps on the Midtown site adjacent to the Paetec facility, that serves as an urban anchor, a destination site that might feature retail and entertainment such as an IMAX theater combined with a Crate & Barrel, an urban grocery store such as Trader Joe's and smaller retail stores. This development site might serve as a transportation node, one of several downtown stations for an alternative-fuel vehicle circulator system. The hub might be a new railroad train station, a multi-modal facility constructed on the site of the current Amtrak station and a potential catalyst for projects and development north of the downtown. From this station, one might access a new lightrail spur to the airport on existing tracks.

Phased construction of a River Walk along both sides of the Genesee River, beginning at the Main Street Bridge and proceeding both north and south, would celebrate our beautiful waterway and offer an opportunity to leverage its value as an incredible amenity to city living, as a tourism attraction, and as a catalyst for development.

A mid-sized theater for performance and conference/meeting activities would be a positive and well used asset, dovetailing with the programming at the Convention Center and nearby hotels. There are opportunities both along the river and Main Street and the St. Paul/South corridor for this project which could be combined with housing, and retail.

Promote Good Urban Design

Keeping design on the forefront, it is critical to establish design standards for development and redevelopment in the downtown for both public and private sector developers. A predictable environment for development includes an understandable and streamlined process with consistent and clearly articulated expectations and guidelines based on established agreed upon principles of good urban design. Design excellence will yield economic divi-



An example of a mid-sized theater, Providence, RI.

dends because of the positive physical impact on the public realm. In the urban setting, the whole is truly more than the sum of its parts.

The city's zoning bureau was largely responsible for the creation of a new award-winning design driven zoning code for Center City. The centerpiece of this document is the Center City Design Guidelines component which has begun to elevate the level of architectural design in downtown. These guidelines, however, are optional, and if a project does not comply with the guidelines, it is subject to review by a public/private design review board called the Project Review Committee (PRC). The PRC has advisory power only; the final decision is left to the Director of Zoning and there is no "parallel code" to fall back on. This system is weak in this regard, with few checks and balances. Another weakness is that the code was put in place before the adoption of the Center City Plan by City Council.

Now that we are closer to an official vision plan for the downtown, it is possible to design a more effective code with mandatory "standards", allowing the PRC to have more official authority over design. This will require a re-evaluation of the current design guidelines, which tend to be overly complex and, in many ways, not easily applicable to a proposed development.

A parking garage with first floor retail, San Antonio, TX.

Transportation and Parking

Transportation drives development. Since the end of WWII the US has invested in the construction of a transportation infrastructure almost entirely devoted to private vehicles. The low density, single use environments encouraged by this transportation model were a major factor in the decline of many older downtowns, including Rochester's. Just as investment in roads results in low density suburban development, investment in transit infrastructure results in a compact, walkable built environment. The revival of the moribund downtown area of Washington, DC, as well as billions of dollars worth of investment in compact, walkable transit oriented developments in numerous locations within the District, Maryland, and Virginia would not have occurred without the construction of the Metrorail system. In cities all over the country, new light rail and exclusive busway transit systems are opening. Ridership almost always exceeds expectations. These investments are transformative, leading to greatly increased investment in locations along their routes.

In most metro areas, growth has led to increasing levels of traffic congestion, which has helped spur interest in transit. In the Rochester area, with its low growth rate, traffic congestion has not yet become a serious problem, making the urgency of transit a harder sell. The prospect of $4.00/gallon gasoline this year (2008) and the likelihood that such escalating energy prices will be permanent, could be the catalyst for transit in this region. We must recognize that transit is an essential public service that reduces the need for costly downtown parking facilities, spurs economic development and increases choice

for all residents.

It is assumed a downtown bus terminal of some form will be constructed at the Renaissance Square site. Recommendations for further transportation improvements include:

- Initiate a downtown circulator, which could utilize small alternative-fuel vehicles to enable people to get around downtown without using their vehicles;
- Begin planning for a Main Street streetcar route. This route should be a short line that connects major activity centers and is centered on Main Street. It could act as a starter for a more extensive future system. Experience has shown that fixed rail systems are more likely to attract real estate investment and riders than bus systems. The permanence of the investment creates greater confidence in investors;
- Begin planning for a major redesign of the RTS system. The current system is archaic in that it requires nearly all riders to travel to a single point to transfer to another bus for their final destination. This results in unreasonably long trips and discourages transit use. To make transit more attractive it must be faster, more frequent, more reliable, cleaner and more pleasant. A redesigned system might include a series of transfer stations around the periphery of the city resulting in more "one seat rides" and shorter trips, with fewer riders coming downtown for the purpose of transferring.
- Construct a new train station at the site of the current Amtrak station. This station should be designed to accommodate future high speed intercity rail service. The relocation of intercity busses to this station should be considered. Access by taxis and private vehicles picking up/dropping off passengers will be more easily accommodated here than at Renaissance Square. The Downtown Circulator could provide service between the two stations;
- Encourage the establishment of a car sharing service (similar to Zipcar) in the downtown area. Such a service will enable more residents to live car free (or with only one car) and will enable more commuters to utilize transit, even if they must occasionally use a car during the work day;
- Encourage the establishment of a bicycle sharing system like those used in cities such as Copenhagen and Paris. Studies show that most car trips are less than five miles and could easily be accomplished by bicycle, at least when the weather is favorable;
- In order to facilitate more bicycling, attention must be paid to creating bicycle paths where possible and making streets friendlier to bicyclists. Bicycles should be seen as transportation, not just recreation. Walking should also be seen as an essential part of the transportation system. Every person who gets off a bus, out of a car or dismounts from a bike becomes a pedestrian. It is just as essential for sidewalks to be clear of snow and ice as it is for roadways. Traffic signals at intersections must treat pedestrians on an equal basis with drivers;
- Obstacles to pedestrians must be removed.

As long as private vehicles dominate the transportation system, parking will drive development. The

Trolley, Memphis, TN.

recent parking study indicates there is an adequate parking supply at present, although there can be shortages in areas such as the East End at certain times. There needs to be an overall parking strategy that deals with issues of management, pricing, location and design. Parking, like transit, must be seen as an essential part of the public infrastructure, critical to the overall success of downtown. A downtown parking strategy should, in tandem with transit improvements, encourage the creation of a "park once" environment. Such a strategy should:

- Maximize on-street parking. On-street parking calms traffic, creates a better pedestrian environment, reduces the need for costly off-street parking and has a greater economic impact than other kinds of parking;
- Establish a pricing structure that keeps an optimum amount of on-street parking open at any given time in order to encourage short term parkers who will patronize street level businesses. Utilize modern methods of payment such as credit cards and cell phones;
- Discourage parking dedicated to particular uses or buildings (except in the case of residential buildings), as shared parking reduces the overall demand for parking;
- Encourage smaller garages, evenly distributed so that pedestrian entrances are with a 5 to 10 minute walk of anywhere downtown;
- Encourage all pedestrian access points to garages to connect to the street network rather than to private buildings or skywalks. Parking garages generate pedestrian traffic, the lifeblood of a healthy downtown;
- Encourage the use of "liner buildings" or first floor pedestrian oriented uses to mask the parking function from view. Parking along street frontages is the most negative pedestrian experience;
- Create a unified, directional parking identity signage system;
- Create a common validation system.

Wayfinding signage, San Antonio, TX.

Strategies for Immediate and Short Term Improvements

Parking, Wayfinding/Circulation

- Increase parking spaces on streets wherever possible;
- Install a wayfinding system.

Pedestrian Scale Street Enhancements

- Streetlights, banners, awnings;
- Target areas – Main Street.

Establish Family Attractions

- Restaurants;
- Entertainment;
- Retail;
- Recreational.

Create Priority Zones

- Provide incentives to encourage retail development and physical improvements. ▲

About the RRCDC

The RRCDC office at the Hungerford Complex.

The mission of the non-profit Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRCDC) is to act as a multifaceted resource center, assisting municipalities and citizens of the Greater Rochester Region to define, understand, promote and implement concepts of design excellence and sustainability for the public realm and built environment.

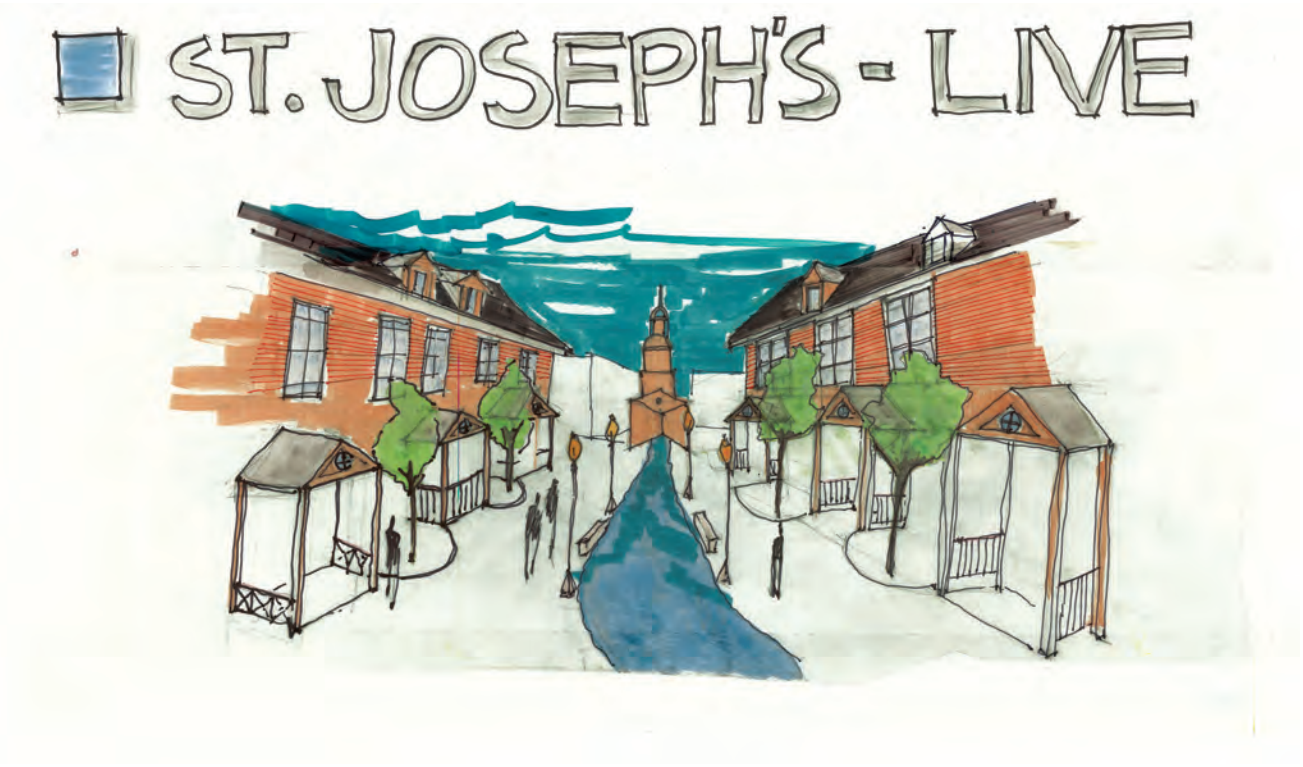
One of our most effective means of civic engagement is the community design charrette, an intensive, participatory planning process that brings together a variety of community stakeholders to observe and share ideas about their community. Together they produce tangible steps toward achieving neighborhood consensus for a community vision. As facilitator, we work with a steering committee of neighborhood representatives to plan the charrette, provide design professionals at the event to help translate citizens' ideas into physical drawings, and follow through with those initial ideas to create a final set of plans and recommendations for the community.

Since we began our work as the AIA Rochester Urban Design Committee (UDC) in 1998, the group has facilitated over twenty community design charrettes, including the Center City Charrette that resulted in a community-based vision for Rochester's downtown and was a starting point for the 2007 Downtown Charrette of which this report is the subject. Other design charrettes facilitated by the RRCDC include the University Avenue Charrette that resulted in construction of the award-winning ARTWalk project. In 2004, we officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and continue to serve our region. ▲

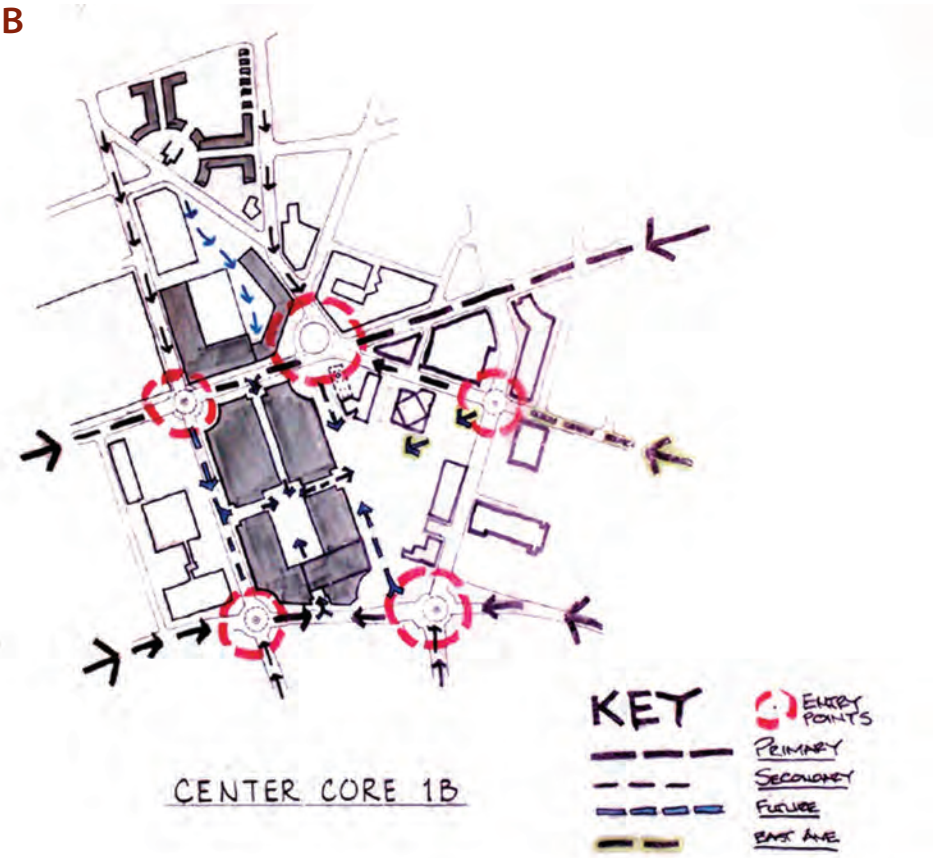
Appendices

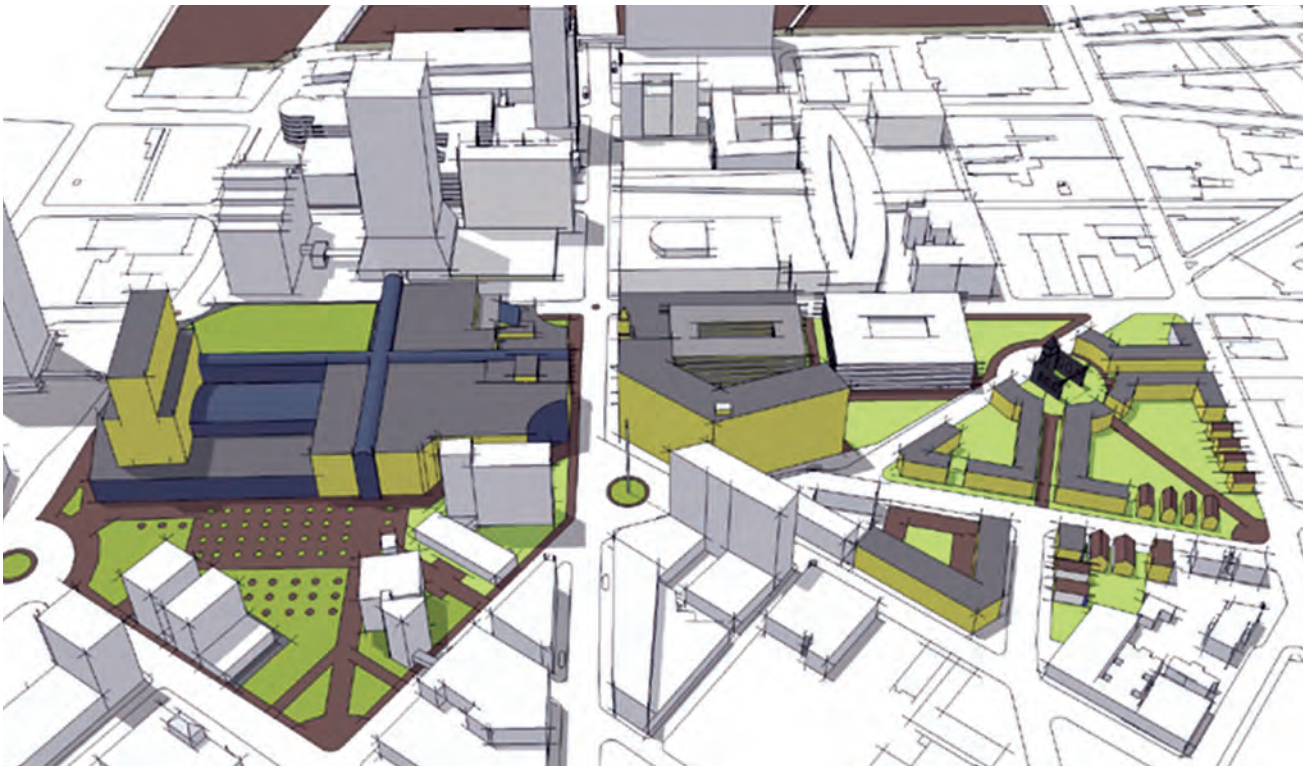
The following pages contain select final drawings and presentations prepared by the focus area groups at the Downtown Design Charrette held in January 2007. In addition, the Center City Master Plan poster, courtesy of the City of Rochester, is also provided. ▲

Focus Area 1A

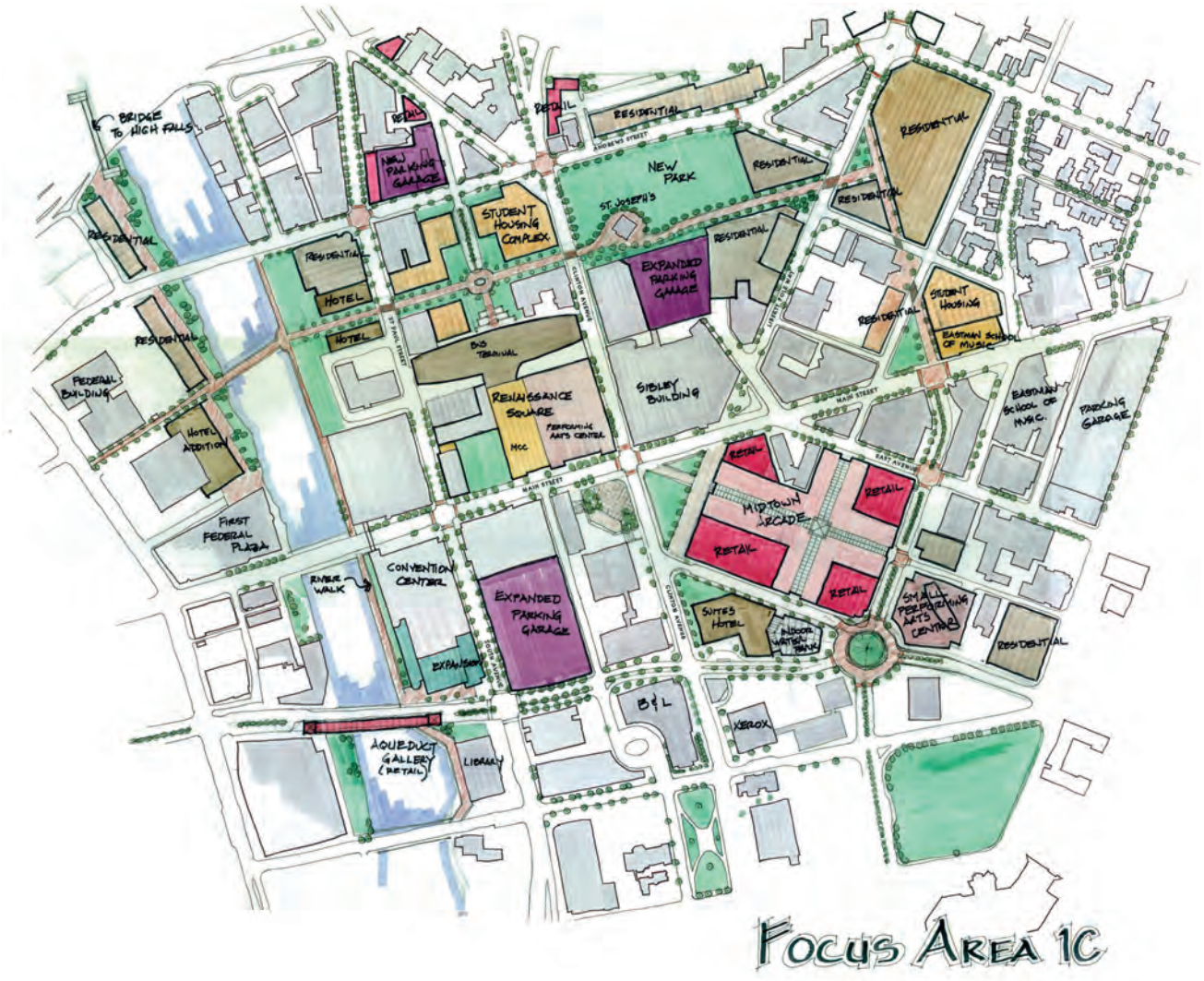


Focus Area 1B



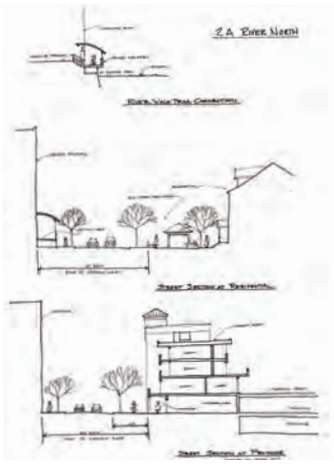


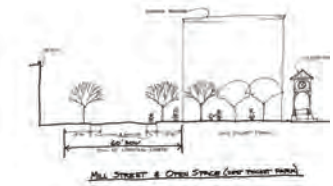
Focus Area 1C



Focus Area 1D

Focus Area 2A





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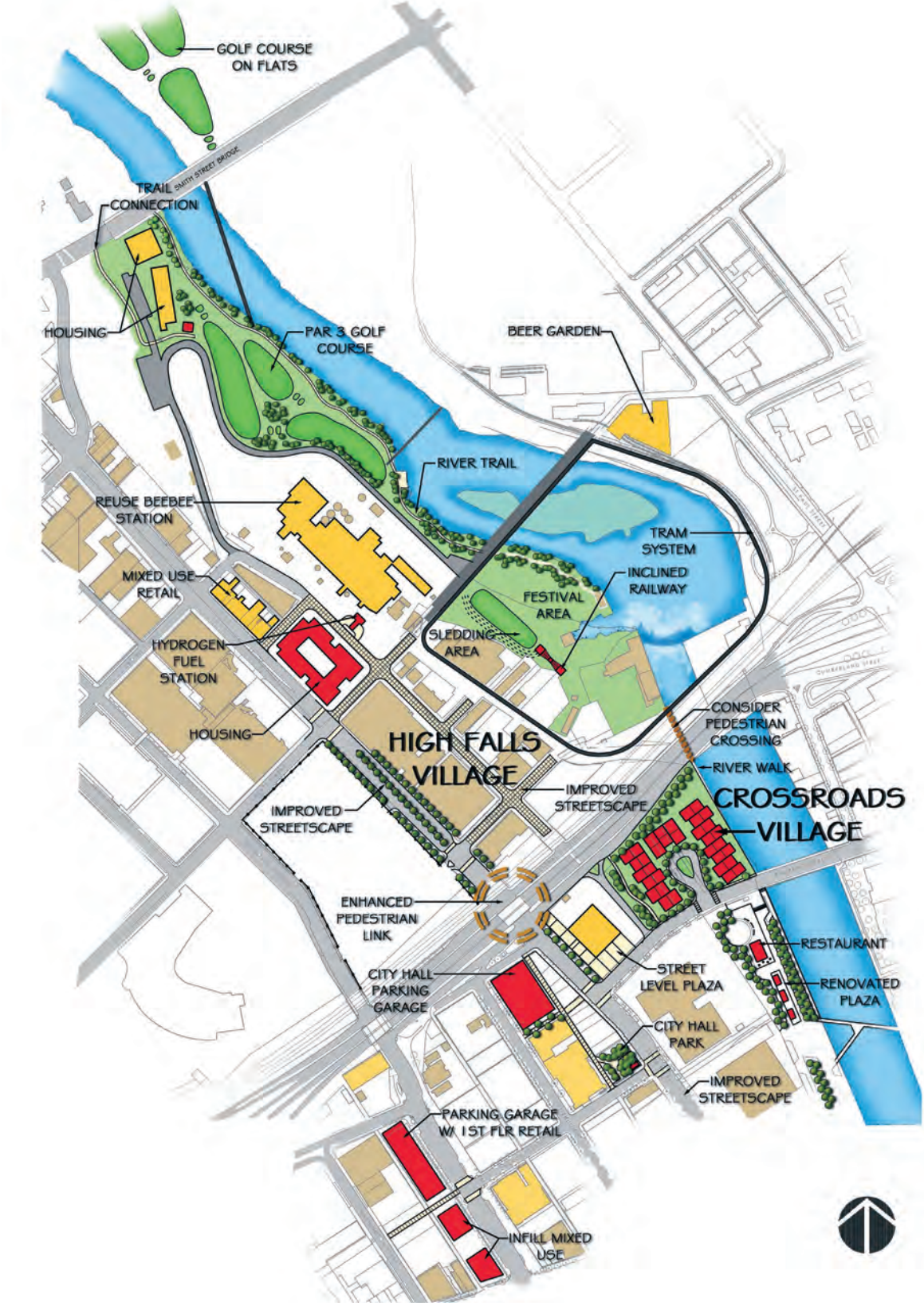
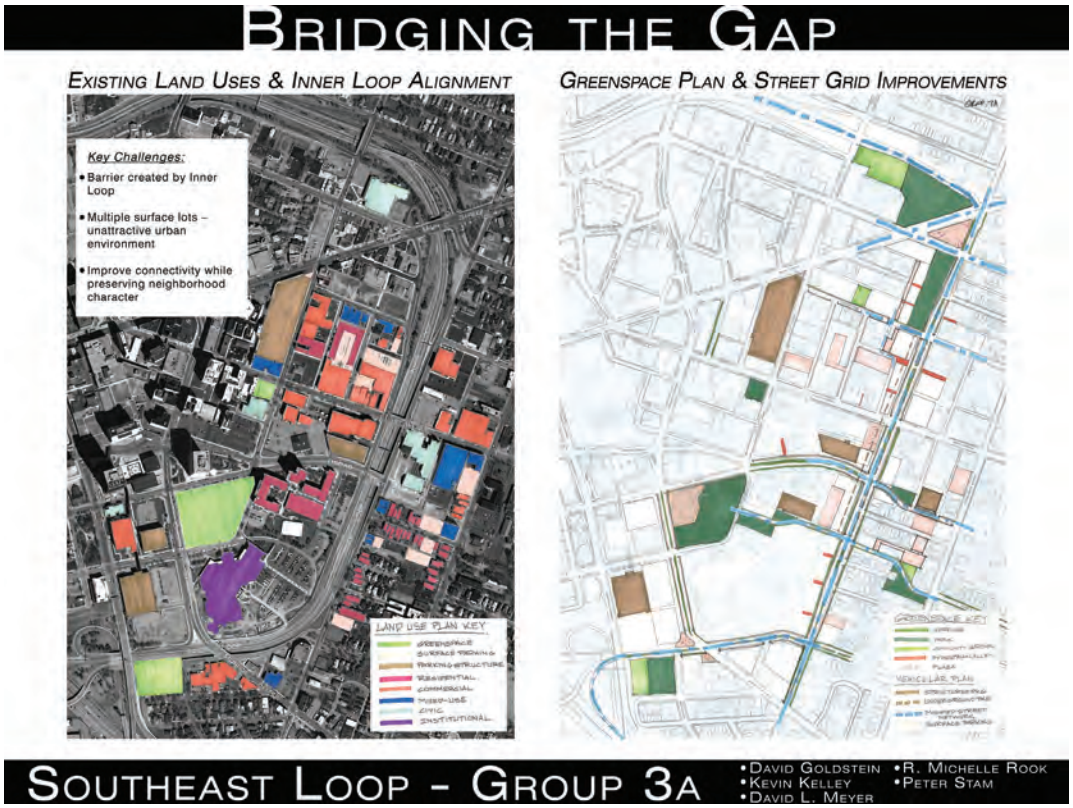
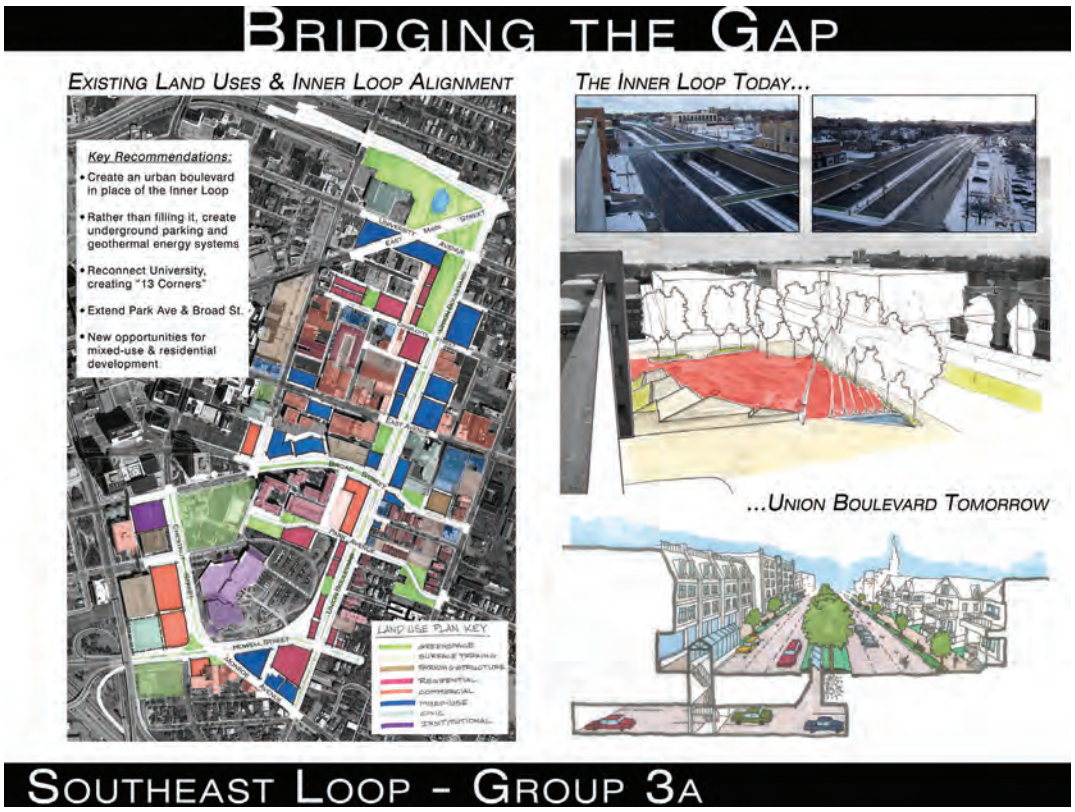


Focus Area 2C

Focus Area 3A





Focus Area 3B

ACTIVE: Accommodating, Connecting, Transporting, Intergrating, Vibrant, Enhancing

RRCDC Rochester Downtown Design Charrette, January 2007

Group 3B

Chestnut St. Near Strong Museum

Chestnut St.at the Cadillac Hotel

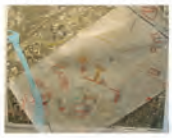
Chestnut St. at the Tunnel of Nothing

Chestnut St. North of Main St.

Inner Loop Near North St.

Opportunities

* Beautiful & Historic Buildings
* Attractions and Destinations
* Vibrant Neighborhoods
* Available and Low Cost Properties

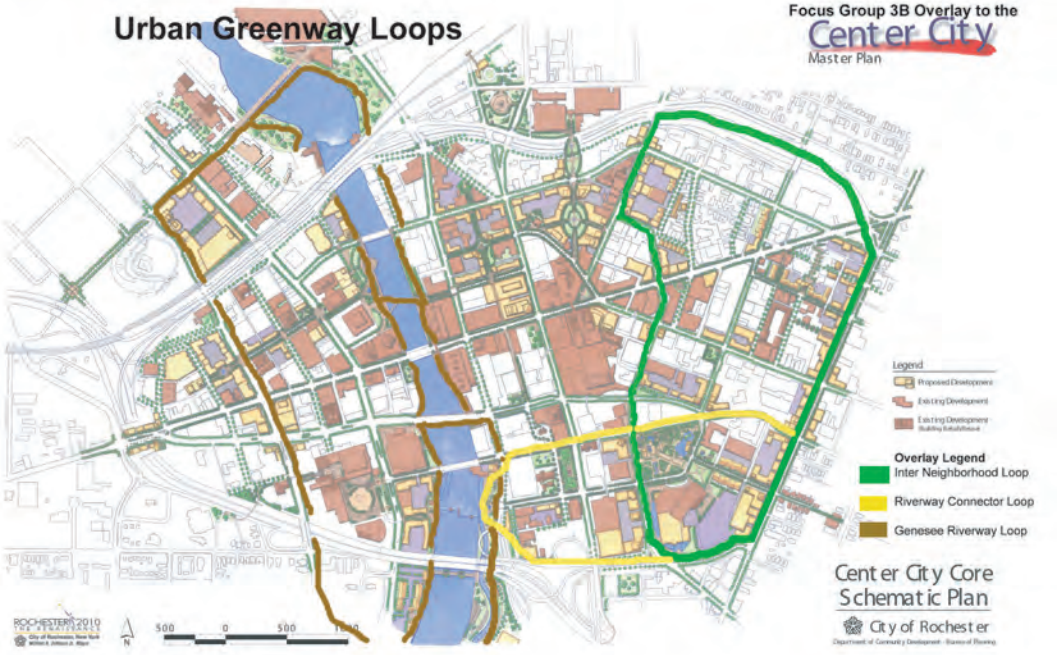


Problems

* Disconnected Communities
* Fast Traffic
* Dead Streets
* Auto-Oriented Scale
* Lack of Human Scale
* Underutilized Land

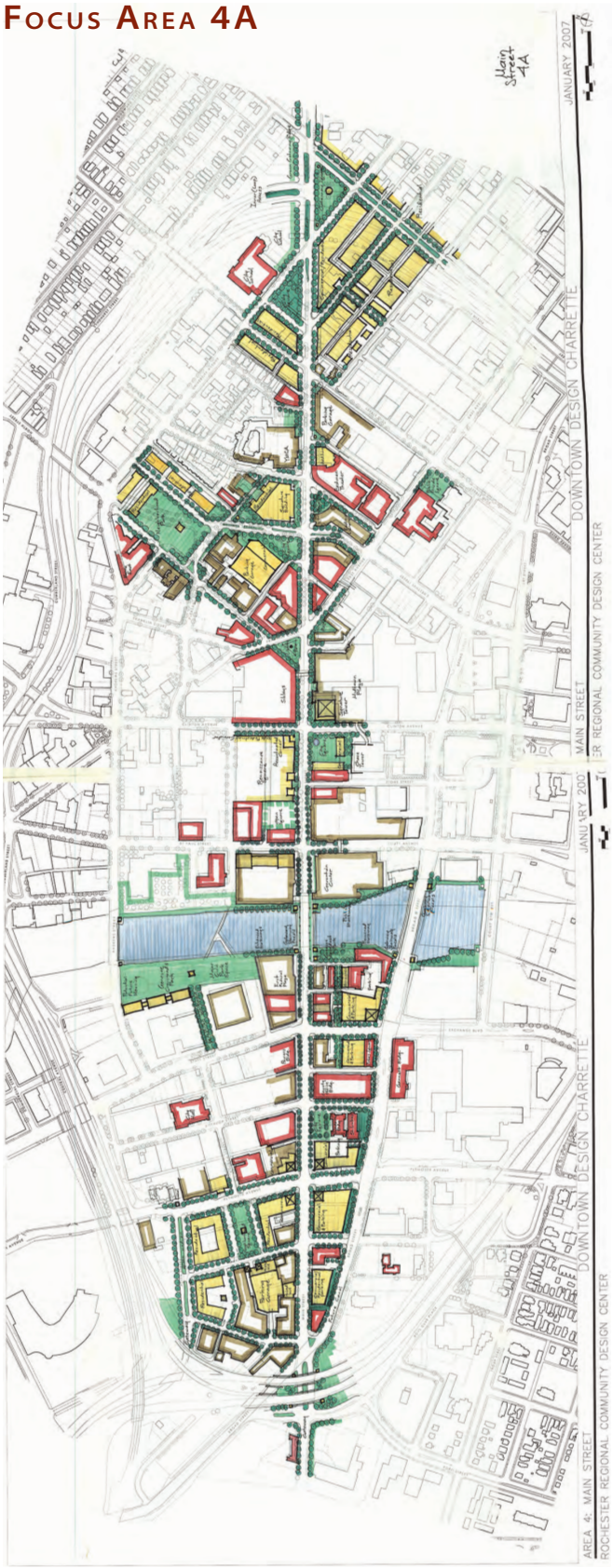
Goals

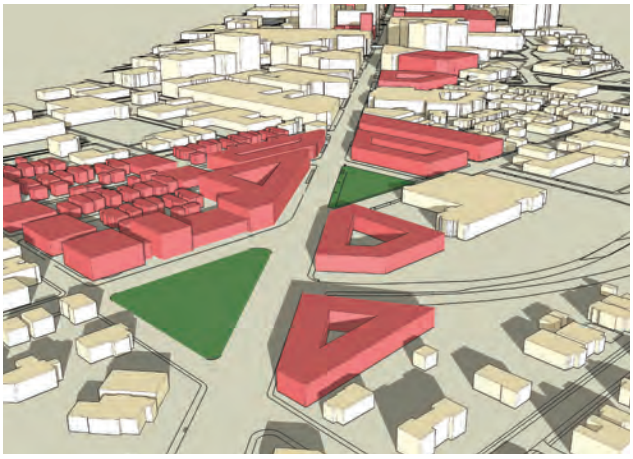
* Provide Easy, Safe and Human Scale Connections to the Neighborhoods and the Center City
* Support and Enhance Destinations/Attractions for both Residents and Visitors
* Support Mixed-Use and Higher Density Development
* Address Non-Physical and Physical Access and Barriers

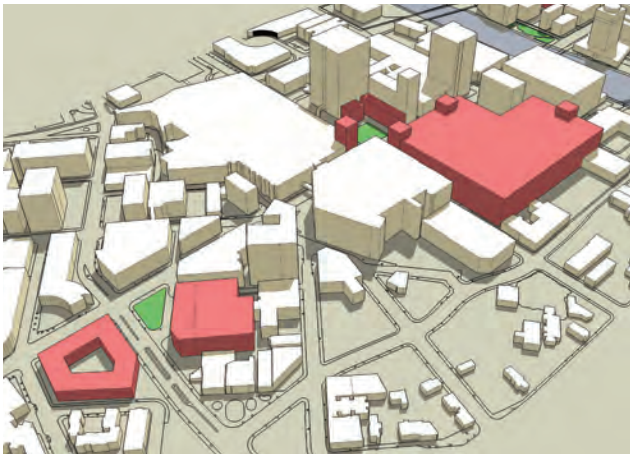


Focus Area 3D

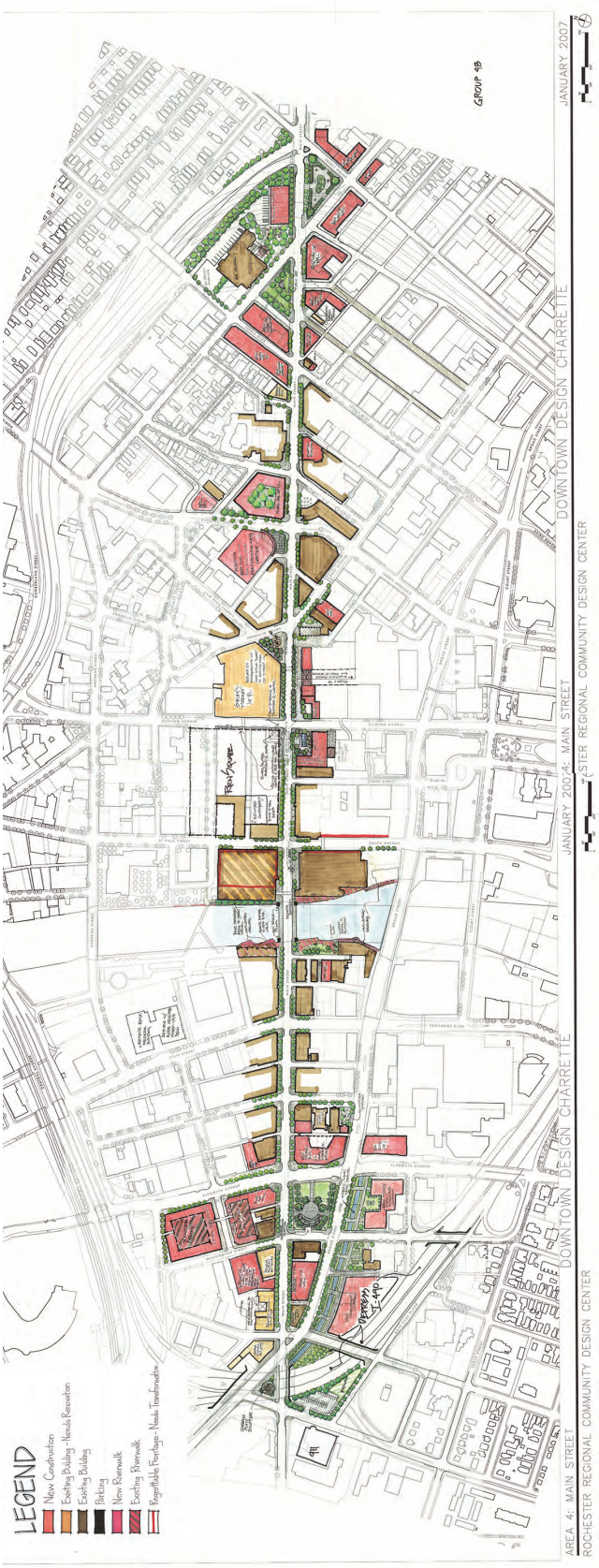
Focus Area 4A





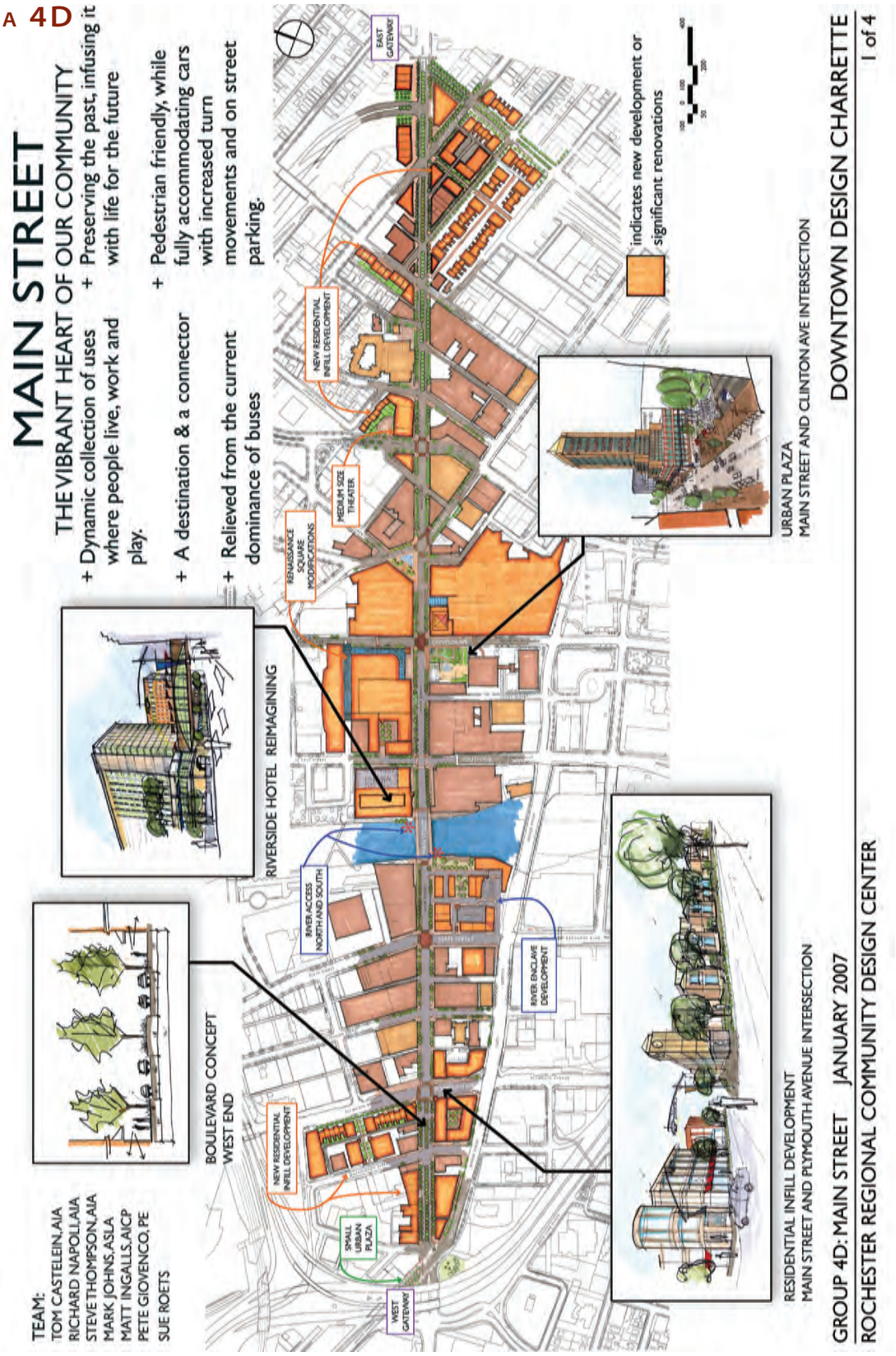


Focus Area 4B

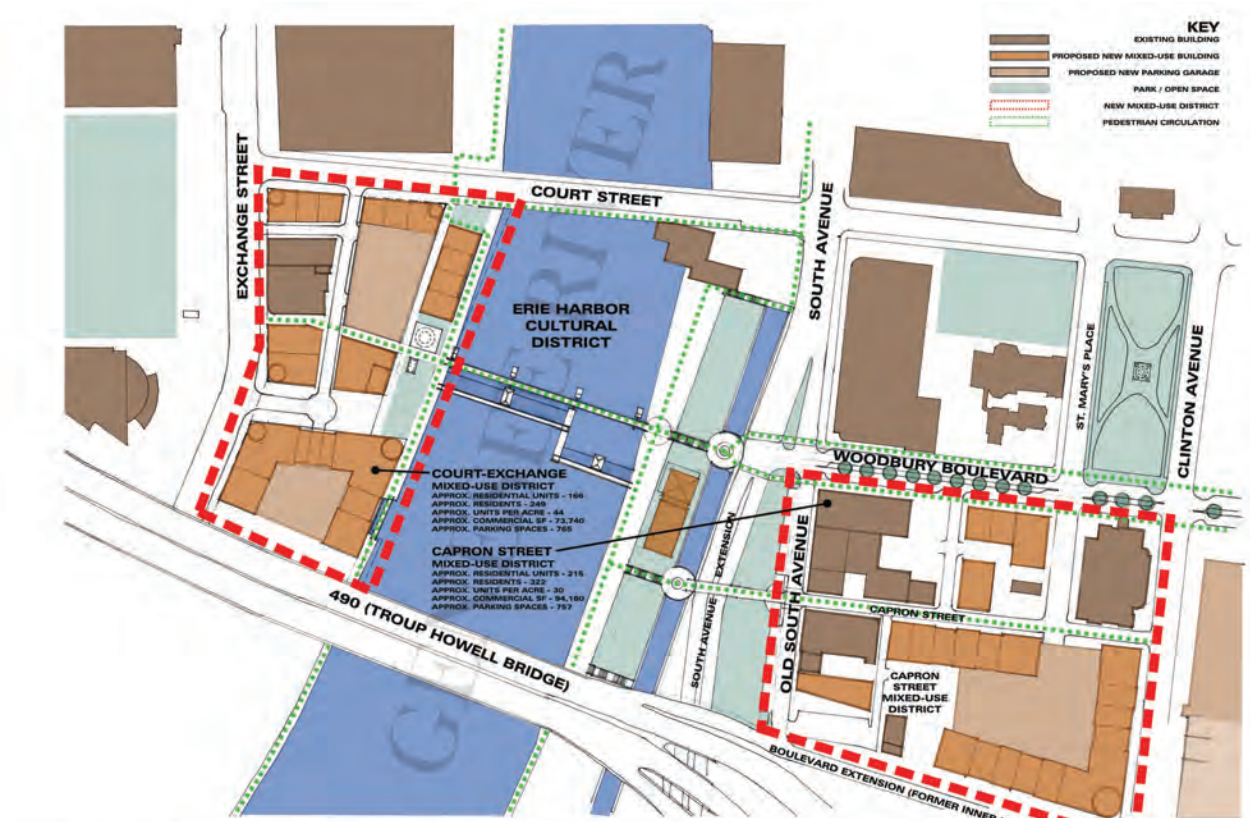


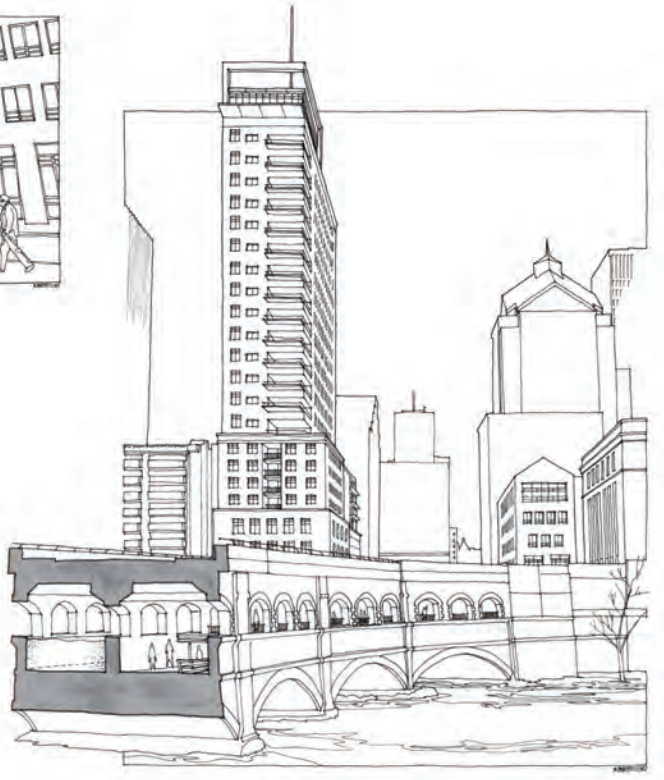
Focus Area 4C

Focus Area 4D



Focus Area 5A

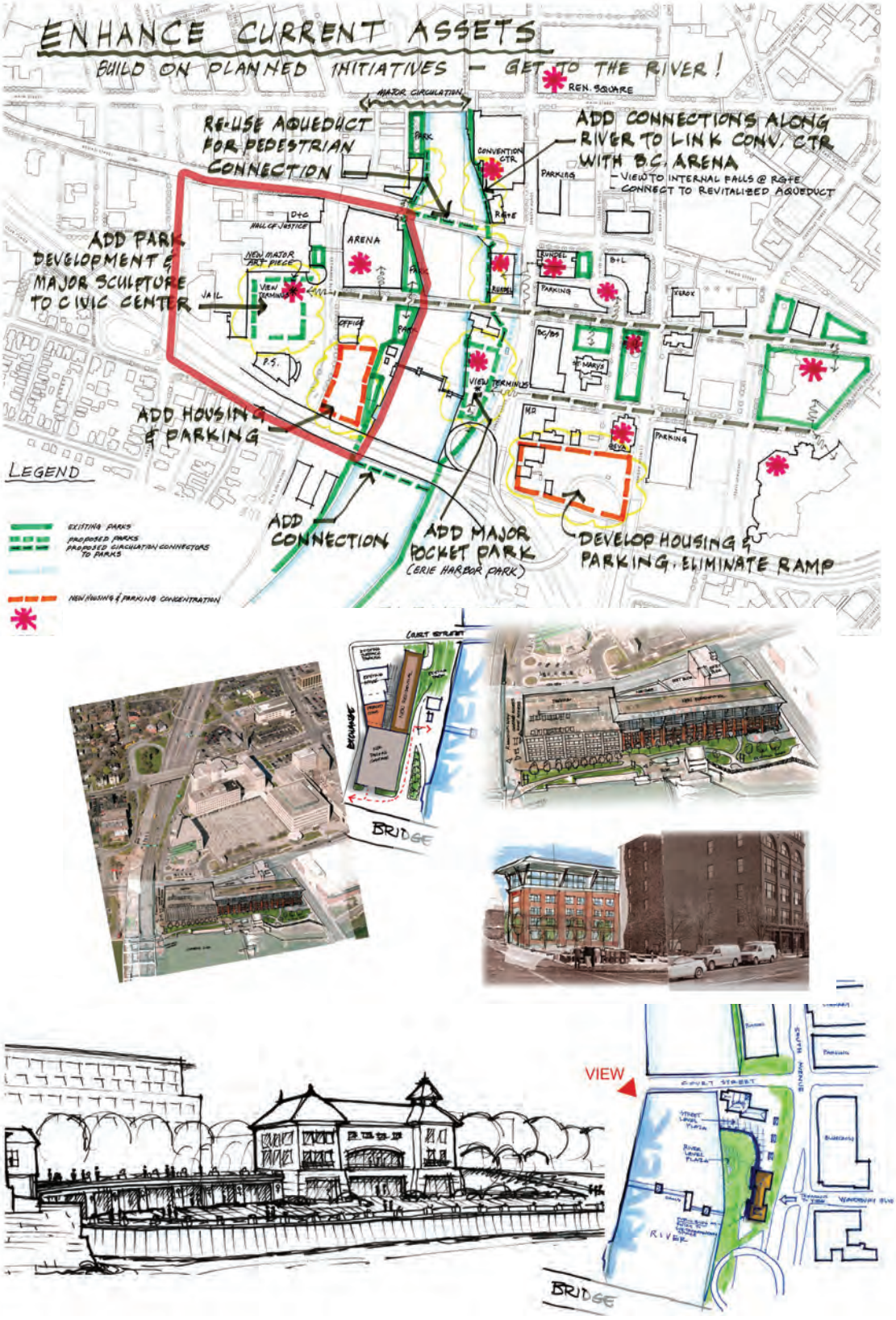




Rochester Tower District Development

RRCDC Downtown Design Charette

Focus Area 5C



Implementing the Renaissance Plan

Campaign 10: Center City

Center City Master Plan

"Walk Center City"

Experience the Vision

Why a Center City Master Plan?

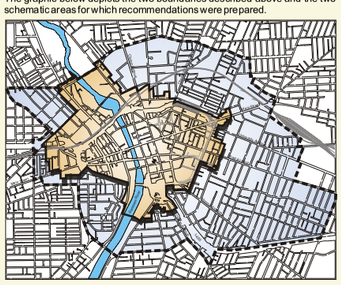
In April, 1999, Rochester City Council adopted the city's new comprehensive plan: Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan. The plan contains 11 campaigns that outline policies, goals and strategies to chart the city's future direction. One of those campaigns, Campaign Ten, is entitled "Center City". The "Center City" campaign outlines specific goals and strategies to be included in a Center City Master Plan.

Center City Boundaries

The Center City Master Plan proposes an outer Center City boundary that is based on original recommendations contained in The Renaissance Plan and the Center City Action Agenda. These documents state that a new functional boundary for what is now known as "downtown" should be created that will be perceived, identified and marketed as the region's "Center City". The Renaissance Plan also states that such a boundary should be designed to create physical connections and design relationships within Center City that reduce the barrier represented by the Inner Loop.

The Center City Master Plan also proposes an inner boundary called the Center City "Core" boundary. The "Core" contains the highest-density development within Center City and includes additional design controls and performance standards within the City's Zoning Ordinance. This "Core" boundary is based on an analysis of existing and proposed land uses, design character and the form and function of the Genesee River and Main Street.

The graphic below depicts the two boundaries described above and the two schematic areas for which recommendations were prepared.



Center City Boundary

Center City "Core" Boundary

"Greater Center City" Schematic Area

"Center City Core" Schematic Area

Plan Development Process

The Center City Master Plan is built upon prior Center City planning efforts, input from stakeholders and both traditional and contemporary urban planning and design ideology. The process was deliberate and thorough. It included three distinct but related phases: an inventory/analysis phase, which reviewed and analyzed all known and relevant plans, studies and projects; a concept development phase, which produced a set of development objectives and design principles for Center City; and a recommendation/implementation phase, which produced a schematic plan, recommendations and an implementation matrix. In essence, the three phases represent what needs to be done to take us from *"where we are"* (inventory/analysis) to *"where we want to go"* (concept development) and a path for *"how we get there"* (recommendations/implementation) regarding Center City. It charts a new direction for future development and design character within Center City.

Hallmarks of the Plan

The Center City Master Plan includes the following basic principles, tenets or characteristics:

Design
- ✓ Emphasize quality design for buildings, sites and the public realm
- ✓ Emphasize building, site and public realm design details in order to create "places" not "spaces"
- ✓ Emphasize historic preservation and historic interpretation where appropriate

Choice
- ✓ Provide a choice of urban lifestyle through options in housing types, styles and locations
- ✓ Provide options and accessibility for personal mobility (car, bus, train, biking, walking, etc.)
- ✓ Provide a variety of entertainment, cultural, dining and shopping venues
- ✓ Provide a variety of public amenities such as parks, plazas, open space, trails and public art

Balance
- ✓ Balance the needs of the pedestrian against the demands of the automobile
- ✓ Balance design standards and consistency with the need for flexibility and innovation
- ✓ Balance the benefits of mixed use against the impacts on neighboring buildings and land uses

Mix of Uses
- ✓ Create an exciting mix of uses on a street, block, neighborhood, and district scale
- ✓ Utilize mixed-use development to create traditional, walkable neighborhoods

Relationships / Connections
- ✓ Relate/connect neighborhoods and districts with a system of parks, open space and sidewalks
- ✓ Relate/connect land uses and activities directly to the Genesee River and Main Street
- ✓ Relate/connect neighborhoods to employment areas/zones

Sense of Place
- ✓ Create an active, attractive and unique sense of place along gateways, streets and boulevards
- ✓ Create an active, friendly and safe sense of place within neighborhoods and districts
- ✓ Emphasize the uniqueness of neighborhoods and districts through a designed sense of place
- ✓ Create an active, friendly and inviting sense of place along the Genesee River and Main Street

"Re-Branding" for New Markets
- ✓ Develop neighborhoods as urban villages; market them to respond to new demographic trends
- ✓ Create new opportunities for high-technology development and specialty-retail
- ✓ Capitalize on new entertainment and tourism "market niches" adaptable to Center City

A New Way of Thinking about Center City

The Center City Master Plan is based on a vision for the future that celebrates its assets and creates an urban experience for people found no where else in the Region.

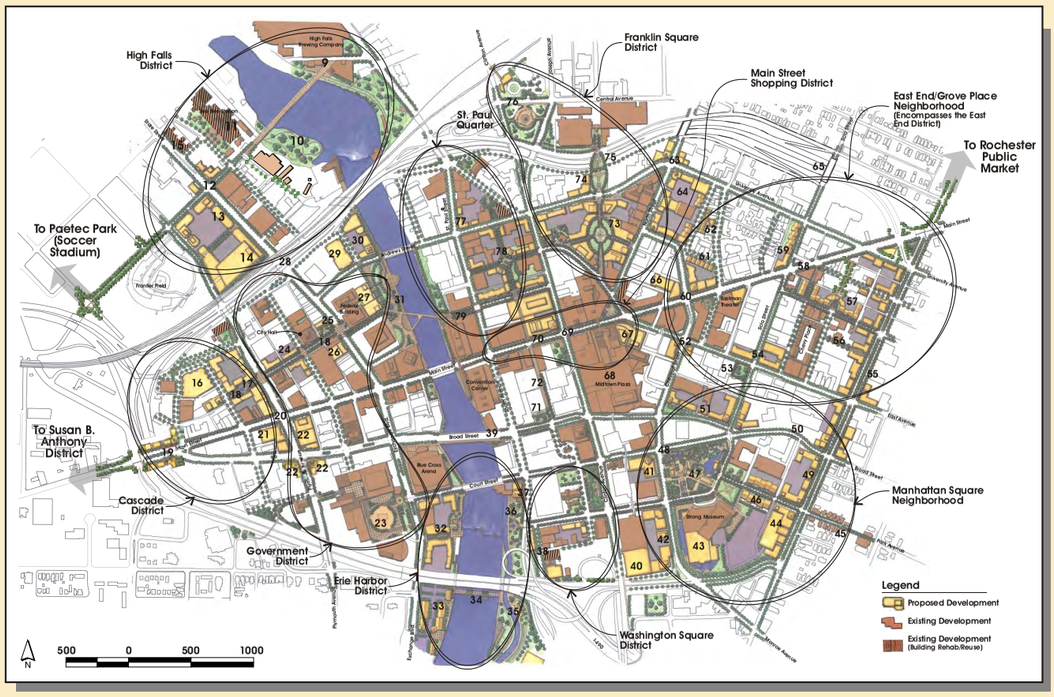
The primary focus of the Center City Master Plan is on the public realm and the opportunities that a vibrant public realm can bring. A pleasant Center City experience will lead to more people that want to walk, work and live Center City.

Center City development is dependent on market conditions. Reducing land use restrictions and regulating the design of Center City development will allow developers to respond to market forces and, at the same time, create an attractive urban environment. A market oriented planning approach will allow the City to identify development opportunities and adjust planning efforts based on market response.

Center City Master Plan Development Charter

- ✓ We, the Citizens of Rochester, recognize that a decline in public and private investment in cities, an acceptance of placeless urban and suburban sprawl, unplanned destruction of the "old" in favor of the "new", a separation of races and incomes, a decline in environmental stewardship and a general decay in our built "heritage" are all symptoms of one larger, interrelated, community-building problem that will challenge our Center City in the future.
- ✓ We, the Citizens of Rochester, believe that combining the best aspects of "urban" and "village" lifestyles into mixed-use, urban village centers, that connecting neighborhoods and communities together through interrelated transportation systems, land use patterns and cultural amenities, that conserving precious natural resources, amenities and environments, that preserving our unique and historic "built" legacy and that providing a variety of urban lifestyle "choices" are all important elements of a successful 21st century Center City.
- ✓ We, the Citizens of Rochester, realize that physical solutions, by themselves, will not solve the social and economic problems of our Center City, and that economic vitality, community stability and environmental health cannot be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework or plan for our Center City that responds to changing market forces and conditions.
- ✓ *We, the Citizens of Rochester*, advocate public policies and development practices within Center City that support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; streets and communities should be designed for the pedestrian and for transit, as well as the car; cities should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; and, urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, ecology and building practice.
- ✓ We, the Citizens of Rochester, understand that well-informed residents, community activists, public and private sector leaders and multi-disciplinary planning and design professionals need to come together, be empowered and be committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community through citizen-based participatory planning and design for our Center City.
- ✓ We, the Citizens of Rochester, therefore, dedicate ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, neighborhoods, districts, streets, trails, parks and river in our Center City through a commitment to the ideas, concepts, objectives, principles and vision of our Center City Master Plan.

Center City "Core" Schematic Plan



Recommendations

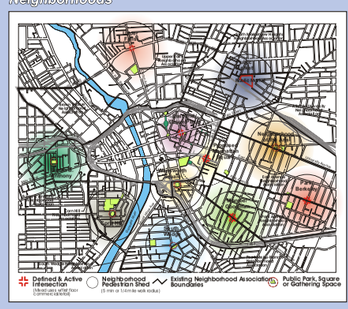
1-8. Prepare detailed schematic plans for "Greater Center City" sub-areas 1-8
9. Develop High Falls Brewery Beer Garden
10. Develop High Falls Park within the Genesee River Gorge
11. Redevelop Beebee Station as major entertainment/mixed-use venue
12. Develop State/Platt Street intersection as major gateway
13. Create new mixed-use development along State Street and pedestrian link
14. Develop new parking garage on Kodak lot
15. Develop new mixed use area across from Kodak Office on State Street
16. Develop new parking garage at west end of district
17. Develop "Plymouth Square" as mixed-use development
18. Develop Church Street axis as major east-west pedestrian connection
19. Potential redevelopment of West Main Street / Inner Loop area
20. Redevelop Main Street / Plymouth Avenue intersection
21. Create new mixed-use development at Main/Plymouth intersection (southwest)
22. Create new mixed-use development at Main/Plymouth intersection (southeast)
23. Redevelop Civic Center Plaza
24. Create new residential development along Church Street
25. Develop new Park at Church/State Street intersection
26. Expand Sister Cities Garage
27. Redevelop/expand Federal Building
28. Redevelop State Street / Inner Loop underpass for improved pedestrian access
29. Develop new Front Street Parking Garage
30. Create new mixed-use, water-oriented development at Front/Andrews St.
31. Redevelop Crossroads Park and parking garage; develop new river/park fountain
32. Create new mixed-use, water-oriented development at Exchange/Court site33
33. Develop Corn Hill Landing ("Erie Harbor on the Genesee")
34. Redevelop Troup/Howell Bridge as signature structure with pedestrian bridge
35. Develop Genesee River White Water Course
36. Develop Erie Harbor Park
37. Develop Rochester Transportation Museum at Court Street / South Avenue
38. Create Mixed-use development at South Avenue / Woodbury Boulevard
39. Redevelop Broad Street Aqueduct
40. Expand Washington Square Parking Garage
41. Develop mixed-uses (with offices) at Court Street/Chestnut Street intersection
42. Develop mixed-uses (with residential) along Chestnut Street
43. Expand Strong Museum
44. Develop parking garage and mixed-use development behind museum
45. Extend Park Avenue pedestrian connection
46. Develop new residential area along new enclave street east of museum
47. Redevelop Manhattan Square Park
48. Reduce width of Chestnut Street / redevelop Chestnut/Court Street area
49. Develop mixed-uses along new Union Boulevard
50. Realign/extend Broad Street / Court Street
51. Develop mixed uses along Broad Street
52. Redevelop Chestnut Street / East Avenue intersection
53. Develop urban pocket park at East Avenue /Broadway
54. Develop mixed-uses (with residential) along East Avenue
55. Develop new Union Boulevard
56. Develop Two Vine pedestrian connection
57. Develop "Charlotte Square" as residential development58
58. Revitalize East Main Street with neighborhood services and pedestrian links
59. Develop new residential along Scio Street
60. Redevelop Main Street / Chestnut Street intersection
61. Develop Grove Street townhouses
62. Develop Gibbs Street townhouses
63. Redevelop Andrews Street / Chestnut Street intersection
64. Realign Chestnut/North Streets / develop new mixed-uses with offices
65. Develop new mixed uses along Union boulevard and residential development behind
66. Develop Achilles Street parking garage
67. Develop Performing Arts Center on Main Street
68. Redevelop/revitalize Midtown Plaza
69. Redevelop Main Street / Clinton Avenue intersection for mixed-use development
70. Develop traditional village Main Street
71. Redevelop Cornerstone Park at Broad / Stone Streets
72. Develop Stone Street wooner / pedestrian connection
73. Develop "Franklin Square" as mixed-use development (high-tech office park)
74. Develop new residential next to Schiller Park (old bus station)
75. Redevelop/expand Shiller Park
76. Redevelop/revitalize Rochester Central Station
77. Redevelop St. Paul Street / Andrews Street intersection
78. Develop "Mortimer Square" as mixed-use development with strong residential
79. Develop Bragdon Wooner
80. Develop Center City Public Art Program
81. Develop Center City Traditional Main Street Plan
82. Develop/Adopt/Implement Center City "Plan for the Public Realm"
83. Evaluate Center City Skyway System Plan
84. Examine potential for Center City Parking Voucher System/Program
85. Examine potential for Center City Shuttle System
86. Develop Center City Views and Vistas Plan/Design Standards
87. Develop Center City Marketing and Promotion Program
88. Develop Center City Signage / Way Finding Program/Plan
89. Develop Center City Priority Project Implementation Strategies and Action Agendas:
    - ✔ Housing
    - ✔ The Public Realm
    - ✔ Mixed-Use Development
    - ✔ Entertainment/Tourism
    - ✔ Parking and Transportation
    - ✔ Promotion/Marketing

Planning & Design Concepts and Components

3 Fundamental Concepts

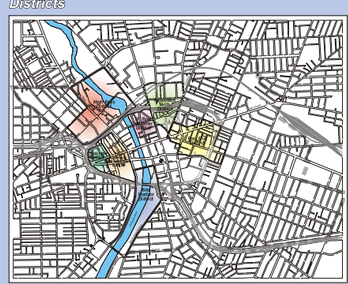
The Center City Master Plan is based on three fundamental urban planning and design concepts: Neighborhoods, Districts and Corridors. These three concepts form the basic building blocks, framework or structure upon which all land use and design recommendations within the Center City Master Plan have been made.

Neighborhoods



Neighborhoods are compact, pedestrian-friendly areas made up of 3 components: residences, amenities and shopping/services. A neighborhood's center includes a park/square or prominent intersection with neighborhood commercial/retail on the corners.

Districts



Districts emphasize a special, dominant single use and/or theme. Districts can be individual neighborhoods or groups of neighborhoods and can be characterized by function (e.g. a specific use) or by design (e.g. Architecture).

Corridors

Corridors are local or regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts. They can be natural (e.g. rivers) or man-made (e.g. streets) and can relate to all forms of travel or movement. Corridors are hierarchal and their design is based on their function.

Components

Each concept is defined or illustrated using one or more planning and design components

Housing and Mixed Use

A diverse housing and land use mix is an important ingredient in creating a vibrant 24 hour Center City. Both private and City owned vacant land and underutilized existing buildings provide opportunities for housing in the Center City Core. A market oriented planning approach will allow the City to identify development opportunities and adjust planning efforts based on market response. Reducing land use restrictions will allow for the mixing of uses based on market demand.

Parking Structures

Parking in all cities is an issue that needs attention. Convenient, safe and available parking is critical to the success of Center City. Changing the way people think about the location of parking could prove to be an important part of a solution. A pleasant public realm and a marketing strategy based on walking distance rather than geographic areas will improve public perception and parking accessibility.

Open Space

An attractive public realm is a critical component in the revitalization of Center City. New parks and squares will be linked with existing public spaces to create the "Walk Center City Trail". Improved streetscapes, pedestrian linkages and identifiable Center City gateways will all help create a pleasant Center City experience which will be the catalyst for future development.

A Traditional Main Street

Main Street may no longer be the region's retail center as it once was but it remains the east-west spine of Center City with opportunities to serve both the region as well as local neighborhoods. Across the Country, Main Streets are being revitalized as citizens search for the experience of "place" not found in suburban shopping centers.

Streets & Boulevards

Great cities are made of great streets and great streets have balance. A hierarchy of streets has been created to classify streets based on their function within the Center City Core. Streets will be designed to move traffic efficiently but not at the expense of pedestrians. Center City streets must be a comfortable place for people as well as automobiles.

ROCHESTER 2010 THE RENAISSANCE

City of Rochester, New York

William A. Johnson Jr., Mayor

For more information regarding the Center City Master Plan or the Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan log on to www.cityofrochester.gov or contact the Bureau of Planning - Department of Community Development • City of Rochester, New York • 585-428-6924

Implementing the Renaissance Plan
Campaign 10: Center City

Center City Master Plan

"Walk Center City"
Experience the Vision

Plan for the Public Realm

"Great Cities are Made from Great Streets"

Successful streets are alive with people that are walking, engaged in conversation and attentive to and interacting with the buildings, trees, plazas and other features of place making. People appear relaxed, off-guard, happy and lingering. Successful streets generate successful stores, restaurants and neighborhoods. Street trees and buildings built to the street give pedestrians a sense of enclosure, security and containment. Multi-story buildings add security with "eyes on the street". A great street block has a thousand points of detail - architecturally, visually and functionally. Characteristics of great streets include street vendors, street entertainers, outdoor cafes, kiosks, benches, fountains and neighborhood bulletin boards. They remind us of the historic roots of our downtowns and city centers as market places, public squares and even early outdoor theaters. All streets should be designed to include the following general characteristics:

- ✓ Security
- ✓ Convenience
- ✓ Efficiency
- ✓ Comfort / Accessibility
- ✓ Sense of Welcome / Place

The Center City Master Plan addresses the issues of street function and street design, walkability and pedestrian environments through the development of a specific Plan for the Public Realm. The plan includes a description of generalized street designations and characteristics for all streets within Center City. It also proposes a set of baseline design objectives or design guidelines for each street designation as well as a series of additional design objectives for special pedestrian enhancement areas.

The Plan for the Public Realm creates a vision for the future development of great streets and public spaces within Center City that will ensure that Rochester will be recognized as a walkable, liveable community and a "great city".

Public Realm Special Enhancements

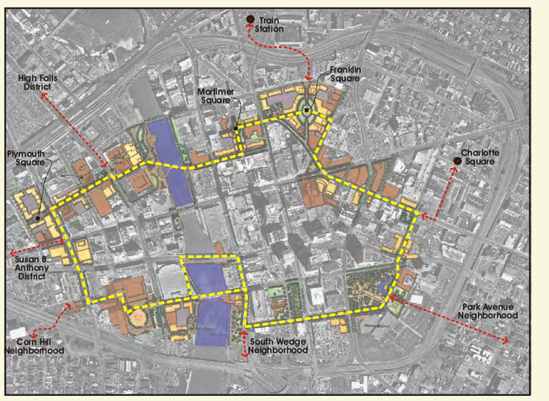
Public realm special enhancement areas within Center City are areas that serve specific functions and, therefore, deserve special design attention. For example, streets that have been labeled as Pedestrian Enhancements Areas are "destination" streets that because of the nature of their existing/proposed buildings, attractions and land uses generate large of amounts of pedestrian and visitor traffic and activity and, therefore, deserve enhanced pedestrian amenities and streetscape design details. Other Special enhancements include:

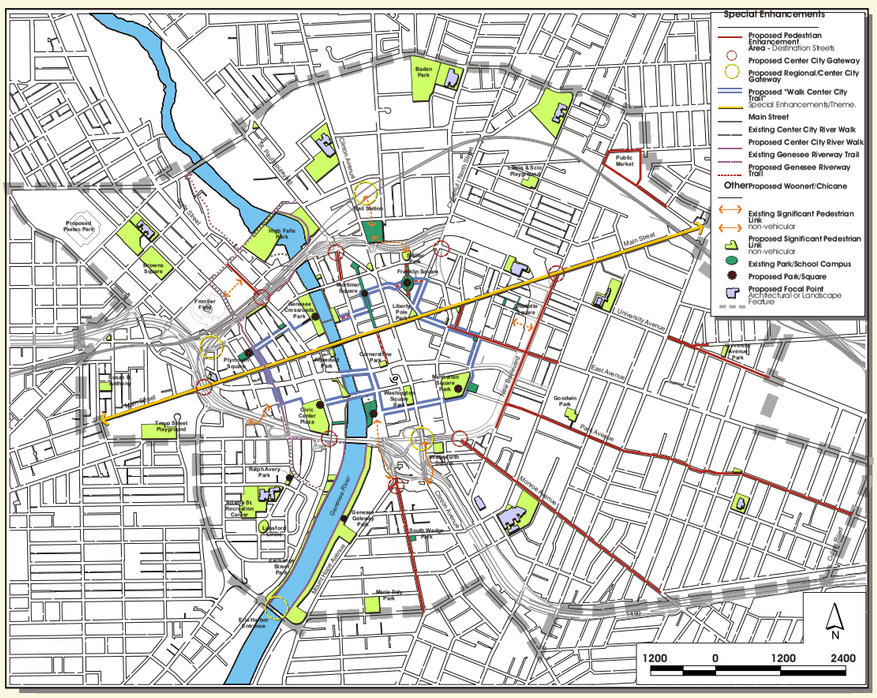
- ✓ Gateway Enhancement Area - significant transportation gateway (vehicular, pedestrian or other) that announces entry into Center City
- ✓ "Walk Center City" Trail - walking trail within the heart of Center City that connects key public spaces
- ✓ Center City River Walk & Genesee Riverway Trail - linear trail system along both sides of the Genesee River that provides direct public access to the river and connects adjacent buildings and land uses to the river
- ✓ Wooner / Chicane - "Living street"; wider pedestrian access way that allows limited/restricted vehicular access

"Walk Center City" Trail

The "Walk Center City" Trail is proposed as a major unifying element of the Center City Master Plan and the Plan for the Public Realm. The concept behind the "Walk Center City" Trail is to tie together Main Street, the Genesee River and major neighborhoods, districts, development sites, public parks, open spaces, special features and entertainment venues into a cohesive trail and pedestrian circulation system. The trail itself would be developed with a high level of design amenity and would be characterized by a series of unique design details including medallions in the pavement, bollards or special signage, landscaping, lighting or street furniture elements.

The "Walk Center City" Trail would significantly add to or enhance the development potential of several key sites around the Center City "Core" by creating another powerful level of urban lifestyle amenity to Center City that is not found in any other municipality in the region.





Street Designations

Five specific street designations were developed for Center City as part of the Plan for the Public Realm. All streets within the Center City "Core" have been designated as one of the following types: neighborhood street, district street, city street, Main Street and boulevard. Design character for each street type is illustrated in the Center City Master Plan. Design character objectives or guidelines for desired basic streetscape amenities or landscape elements for each primary street type are also included in the Center City Master Plan.

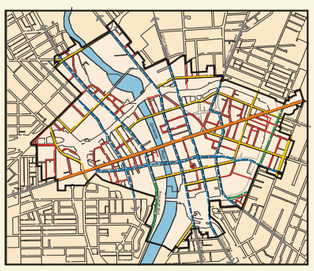
Neighborhood Street
Pedestrian-oriented local street that connects residences and neighborhoods with each other and with district and city streets.

District Street
Moderately-scaled connector street that provides vehicular and pedestrian access to and between neighborhood and city streets and to and through neighborhoods and districts.

City Street
Principal facility for carrying traffic through and across Center City. City streets connect districts and provide the primary means for entering/exiting Center City.

Main Street
Principal "ceremonial" route through Center City that facilitates traffic movement while making businesses attractive and convenient to pedestrians and vehicles through a significant public realm zone. Main street functions as a retail "marketplace" where cars and pedestrians have relatively equal status.

Boulevard
Wider, pedestrian-oriented street with landscaped center median and broad sidewalks that facilitates traffic movement while making businesses attractive and convenient to pedestrians and vehicles through a significant public realm zone. A boulevard links or connects districts to each other within Center City or to areas outside of Center City.



Center City Design Districts

Purpose of the Center City District

The Center City District (CCD) is defined by a clear and easily recognized boundary and point of transition from the character and land uses of the surrounding neighborhoods. Design criteria have been established to protect and maintain the historical and architectural character of the Center City "Core". The primary objective of the criteria is to promote development that is compatible and harmonious with that character.

The Center City District has been subdivided into one base district, which focuses on urban diversity and the public realm, and 6 design districts. The design districts were established based on a predominant and easily recognized character or theme that is self-contained within identifiable boundaries. The districts define areas having, or proposed to have, specific architectural features or design elements that make them unique in relation to other areas in the Center City.

Riverfront District

Main Street District

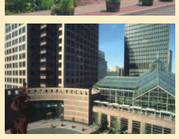
Design Districts

Riverfront District
The Riverfront District is characterized by pedestrian scaled buildings with clearly defined bases, mid-sections and crowns. Buildings range from 3 to 6 stories in height and transition upwards as they move away from the water's edge. A thirty (30) foot buffer is maintained along the river and no structures are allowed in the buffer; pedestrian access to the river is a priority in the district. Buildings are tall, narrow masses with rich materials and colors. Minimum front setbacks create intensified pedestrian scaled streets with an apparent riverfront theme.

Main Street District
The design intent of the Main Street District is to promote Main Street as the dominant corridor in the Center City. The typical design character of the district is defined by buildings ranging in height from 3 to 15 stories, which have clearly defined bases, mid-sections and crowns. Primary entrances are located along Main Street to provide maximum accessibility. Buildings are rich in material and detail and possess a monumental quality. Consistent setbacks create strong edges and promote spatial definition along the streetscape.

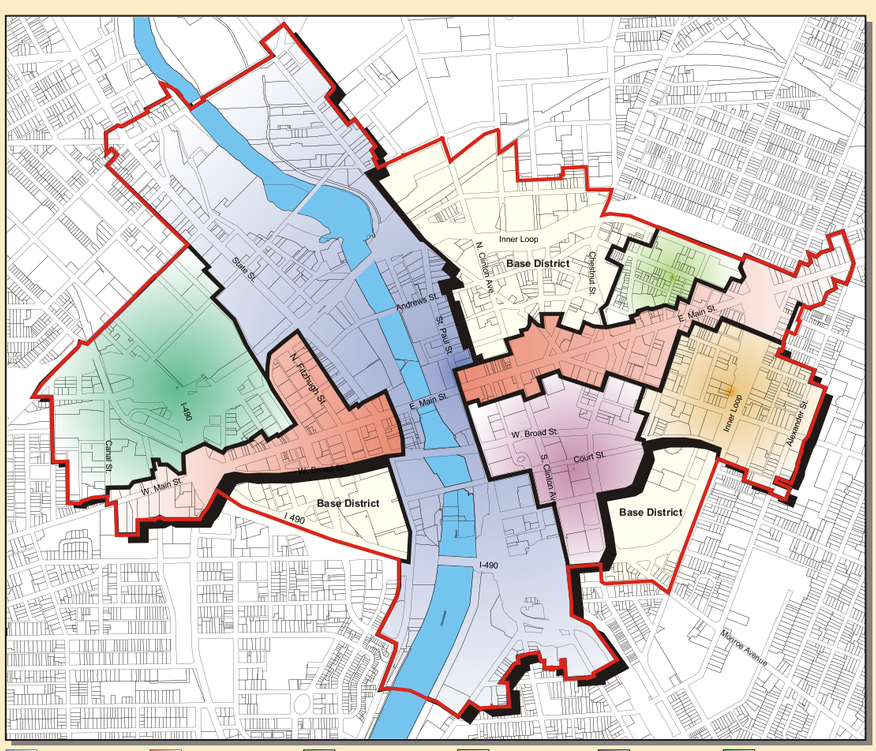
Grove Place District
The intention of the Grove Place District is to create pedestrian scaled enclaves that discourage through traffic. Buildings should be created which exhibit the traditional residential character of the district. The creation of "green" streets strengthens pedestrian linkages through the district. Creating a strong relationship between public streets and private spaces is encouraged. The preservation of heritage resources and qualities is a primary concern.

East End District
Design principles for the East End District should encourage compact, dense development, with a focus on developing low-rise structures, including townhouse and garden apartment styled buildings. A greenway system should be developed in the district to act as an organizing element, enhancing connections to key destinations in the public realm. Linkages between the district and the other CCD Districts should be improved.



Tower District
Design principles in the Tower District are intended to create a contiguous system of public spaces linked by pedestrian promenades. Buildings should be created to accommodate a range of uses, including both public and private spaces, and they should have diverse facade features, with a clearly defined base, mid-section and crown. An appropriate scaled relationship between lot coverage and block size will maintain the desired character of the district.

Cascade-Canal District
The design intent for this district preserves and promotes its industrial warehouse character and creates a pedestrian scaled enclave. The design character is typified by 2-5 story, horizontal box-like buildings with flat rooflines. Facades are composed of dominant vertical columns and strong horizontal bands, which divide translucent glass panels. Buildings have zero setback along street frontages to create a strong sense of enclosure and an appropriate pedestrian scale. A pedestrian oriented alleyway system is created through the district with minimum side and rear yard setbacks. This pedestrian system links streets and allows for integrated connections to adjacent districts.



City of Rochester, New York
William A. Johnson Jr., Mayor

For more information regarding the Center City Master Plan or the Rochester 2010: The Renaissance Plan log on to www.cityofrochester.gov or contact the Bureau of Planning - Department of Community Development • City of Rochester New York • 585-428-6924

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